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S E R M O N S

O N S E V E R A L

SUBJECTS *and* OCCASIONS,

by the most Reverend

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L A T E

Lord Archbishop of *Canterbury*.

VOLUME the TWELFTH.



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S E R M O N C C X X X V I I I .

The evidences of the truth of the
christian religion.

2 COR. iv. 3, 4.

*But if our gospel be hid, it is hid to them that are lost :
in whom the GOD of this world hath blinded the
minds of them which believe not, lest the light of the
glorious gospel of CHRIST, who is the image of GOD,
should shine unto them.*

I AM considering the fourth evidence which SERM. CCXXXVIII
those who lived in our SAVIOUR's time had of The fifth sermon on this text.
his divine authority, viz. the spirit of prophecy
prov'd to be in him, and made good by the accom-
plishment of his predictions. I gave five instances
of our SAVIOUR's predictions.

1. Those which foretold his death, and its circumstances.
2. Those which foretold his resurrection, and its circumstances.
3. Those which foretold the descent of the HOLY GHOST upon the apostles, with the circumstances thereof.

These three I have consider'd, and now proceed to the two which remain.

4. The next instance therefore of our SAVIOUR's prophetic spirit, is his foretelling the destruction of Hierusalem, with the circumstances of it. Now because this is one of the greatest instances of our SA-

SERM. VI^{OUR}'s prophetical spirit, and so particular a prediction, so punctually answered by the event, therefore I shall insist the longer upon it : especially because I look upon it as one of the most convincing arguments that can be brought against the Jews for the truth of our religion.

CCXXXVIII

And in order to our clearer proceeding in this matter that I am speaking to, I shall do these three things :

First, explain the series and order of this prediction of our SAVIOUR's, concerning the destruction of Hierusalem.

Secondly, expound the particulars of it, as we find them in Matth. xxiv. compared with the other two evangelists that wrote of it, St. Mark and St. Luke.

Thirdly, make some reflexions upon this prediction, and the punctual accomplishment of it ; from which it may appear of what force this argument is for the conviction of the Jews of the truth of our religion.

First, I shall explain the series and order of this prediction concerning the destruction of Hierusalem. And this is necessary, because it seems to most interpreters to be so intermingled with a prophesy of CHRIST's last coming at the end of the world, that it is no easy matter to separate those two prophecies of the destruction of Hierusalem, and the end of the world. Besides that it is incumbered with some other difficulties, arising from some particular expressions in this famous prediction of our Saviour's.

From the 34th verse of the xxiiid chapter of St. Matthew, to the 29th of the xxivth chapter, there is a clear prediction of the destruction of Hierusalem, with the preceding signs, and concomitant and subsequent

sequent circumstances of it : but at the 29th verse, ^{SE R M.} the prophesy of the end of the world seems to be ^{CCXXXVIII} designedly joined to it : for the evangelist says, “ immediately after the tribulation of those days, the “ sun shall be darkened,” &c. where he enumerates dismal signs, and forerunners of the dissolution of all things ; but it is now 1600 years since the destruction of Hierusalem, and yet the world is not at an end. How is it then that the evangelist says, “ immediately after the tribulation of those days !” This is the first difficulty.

Secondly, after this prophesy of the end of the world, we find those words in all the three evangelists, “ verily I say unto you, this generation shall “ not pass away, till all these things be fulfill’d.” As if not only the destruction of Hierusalem, but the end of the world were to happen in that age. This is the other difficulty.

But notwithstanding all this, I doubt not but by comparing the three evangelists together, to make the series and order of these prophecies very clear.

In order whereunto, we are to consider that our SAVIOUR in this prophesy foretels three things very distinct in time.

1. The destruction of Hierusalem.

2. The fate and condemnation of the Jewish nation after this desolation, and during their captivity among the Gentiles, among whom they were to be scattered. And this we have clearly and fully express’d by St. Luke xxi. 23, 24. “ There shall be “ great distress in the land, and wrath upon this “ people. And they shall fall by the edge of the “ sword, and shall be led away captive into all nations, and Jerusalem shall be troden down of the

SERM. "Gentiles, until the time of the Gentiles be fulfilled." So that this prediction comprehends from the destruction of Jerusalem, all the time of the captivity of the Jews among the Gentiles, which we see is not yet expired, and God alone knows how long it shall last. And then,

3. Forerunning signs of the end of the world, which the evangelists say shall happen "after the tribulation of those days;" that is, when God hath made an end of punishing the nation of the Jews. And this seems to me wholly to clear, and take off the first difficulty.

As to the second, namely, that after the prophecy of the end of the world, we find these words added by our SAVIOUR, "verily I say unto you, this generation shall not pass away, till all these things be fulfilled," which seems to intimate that the end of the world should happen in that age. For the answering of this, I shall not betake myself to that refuge which some have done, by explaining these words thus, "this generation, that is, this nation shall not pass away," shall not be utterly destroyed, but shall remain scattered up and down the world, as a monument of God's displeasure against them, till the end of all things. For tho' the expression γενεα down, "this generation," may well enough be translated "this nation, this race of people;" yet the precedent words will not admit this interpretation; for it is said in the verse immediately before, "so likewise ye, when ye shall see all these things, know that it is near, even at the doors." So that our SAVIOUR speaks of something very near at hand, which necessarily confines it to "that generation."

Therefore

Therefore the plain solution of this difficulty is SERM.
this, that our SAVIOUR ends his prediction of the CCXXXVIII
destruction of Hierusalem, and the end of the world,
at the 31st verse, where he says that “ the son of
“ man shall send his angels with a great sound of a
“ trumpet, and they shall gather together his elect
“ from the four winds, from one end of heaven to
“ the other.” And then he makes some reflexions
upon what he had foretold concerning the destruction
of Hierusalem, and the end of the world.

(1.) As to the destruction of Hierusalem, he tells
them a parable of the fig-tree, that by “ the put-
“ ting forth of its leaves,” we know that “ the
“ summer is nigh : so likewise when ye shall see all
“ these things,” namely, all those signs which I have
given you of the destruction of Hierusalem, “ know
“ that it is near, even at the doors ;” and then he
adds, “ verily I say unto you, this generation shall
“ not pass away, until all these things be fulfilled ;”
that is, many of those who are now alive, shall live
to see all those signs which I have mentioned. And
then,

(2.) He reflects upon his prediction of the end of
the world, ver. 36. “ But of that day and hour
“ knoweth no man,” &c. that is, not of that other
day, of which I have been speaking, namely, “ of the
“ end of the world, no man knows ;” as if he had
said, the signs which I have given of the destruction
of Hierusalem are as plain, as the budding of the
fig-tree is a sign of summer : but I have not given
such plain signs of the end of the world, and the day of
judgment. That I have declared to you in dark alle-
gories of “ the sun’s being darkened, and the moon’s
“ not giving her light, and the stars falling from
“ heaven,”

SERM. "heaven," which cannot be understood literally; and
 CCXXXVIII the mystical meaning of them is very hidden.

And thus I hope I have removed those difficulties, and made the order and series of this prophesy very clear.

Secondly, I come in the next place to expound the particulars of this prophesy, so far as it concerns the destruction of Jerusalem, as we find them in the xxivth of St. Matthew, compared with the other two evangelists that wrote of it, St. Mark and St. Luke; and to shew the exact accomplishment of each of these particulars, not only from the tradition of christians: but from the writings of the Jews and Heathens, which are so much the stronger on our side, because they are the testimonies of enemies. And in the expounding of this prophesy, I shall distinctly consider these three things.

1. Our SAVIOUR'S general prediction of the siege and total destruction of the city of Jerusalem, and of the temple, which you have from the 34th verse of the xxiiid chapter, to the 3d verse of the xxivth.

2. His prediction of the signs that should forerun the destruction of Hierusalem, from verse the 3d to verse the 21st.

3. The concomitant and subsequent circumstances of it, from verse 21st to verse 29.

1. Our SAVIOUR'S general prediction of the siege of Hierusalem, and of the total destruction of the city. This our SAVIOUR foretels, Luke xix. 41, 42, 43, 44. "And when he was come near, he beheld the city and wept over it, saying, if thou hadst known, even thou, at least in this thy day, the things which belong unto thy peace: but
 " now

“ now they are hid from thine eyes. For the days
“ shall come upon thee, that thine enemies shall
“ cast a trench about thee, and compass thee round,
“ and keep thee in on every side ; and shall lay thee
“ even with the ground, and thy children within
“ thee ; and they shall not leave in thee one stone
“ upon another ; because thou knowest not the time
“ of thy visitation.” So Josephus tells, lib. 6. that
Titus raised a wall round about Hierusalem, and
kept them in on every side ; so that none could come
out, though many thousands were famished with
hunger ; which was so sad and dismal a calamity,
that our SAVIOUR, though he knew how just a
cause there was for it, yet out of very humanity,
and tenderness of nature, he could not but upon the
foresight of so sad a destruction, “ weep over it.”
He indeed expressed his vehement desire that this
might have been prevented, chap. xxiii. 37. “ O
“ Hierusalem, Hierusalem, thou that killest the
“ prophets, and stonest them that are sent unto
“ thee ; how often would I have gathered thee, as
“ a hen gathereth her chickens under her wings,
“ and ye would not !” Therefore having brought
this ruin wilfully upon themselves, he pronounceth
the sentence of their desolation, verse 38. “ Behold
“ your house is left unto you desolate !” And at
the beginning of the next chapter, when the disciples
were shewing him the beautiful structure of the tem-
ple, he foretels, that “ there should not one stone
“ be left upon another, which should not be thrown
“ down.”

Now that all this was punctually accomplished,
Josephus tells us lib. 7. Bell. Jud. that when the
Romans had taken the city, Cæsar gave order to lay

SERM. it waste to the ground, excepting some part of the
 CCXXXVIII wall which was left for the guards of soldiers, and
 three of the strongest towers, which he ordered to be
 left for a standing monument of the Roman courage :
 but all the rest of the city was so levelled, that no man
 that should come to see it, could believe that it was
 ever inhabited.

And our SAVIOUR's prediction of the utter ruin of
 the temple, was most remarkably fulfilled. For the
 Roman history tells us, that Turnus Rufus with a
 plough-share did tear up the foundation of the tem-
 ple, and left no part of it, not so much as under-
 ground, undissolved. So that our SAVIOUR's pro-
 phesy was literally fulfilled, "there was not left one
 stone upon another, that was not thrown down."

2. I shall next consider our SAVIOUR's prediction
 of the signs which should forerun the destruction of
 Jerusalem, namely, these eight.

First, that there should rise up false and counter-
 feit Christs or Messias's.

Secondly, great judgments should befall the world,
 and particularly that nation, not long before that
 time; there should be "wars, and rumours of
 wars, famines, pestilences, earthquakes in divers
 places."

Thirdly, fearful sights and signs from heaven.

Fourthly, persecution of the christians.

Fifthly, that upon this occasion there should be a
 great apostasy of christians.

Sixthly, that upon this persecution many false pro-
 phets and teachers should arise.

Seventhly, that there should be an universal pub-
 lication of the gospel before this great desolation
 should happen.

Eighthly,

Eighthly, and lastly, which was to be the most immediate sign and forerunner of their ruin, "the
"abomination of desolation should be seen stand-
"ing in the holy place." And these you have set down from the 3d verse of this xxivth chapter to the 21st, which I shall briefly expound, and shew how the event did correspond to the prediction, SERM.
CCXXXVIII

Our SAVIOUR having before foretold the destruction of Jerusalem, and the temple in general, the disciples come to him, and ask him two questions, "when these things should be? and what should be the sign of his coming?" that is, in judgment to destroy Jerusalem; and "what should be the signs of the end of the world?" I shall only consider the first, the signs that should forerun the destruction of Jerusalem, as being only pertinent to my present purpose.

First, he foretels there should be false and counterfeit Christs or Messias's, ver. 3, 4. "Take heed that no man deceive you, for many shall come in my name, saying, I am CHRIST, and shall deceive many." This our SAVIOUR gives as one of the first signs, and therefore St. Luke adds, chap. xxi. 8. "The time draweth near," that is, it should not be long before this sign should appear; and it accordingly happened. Josephus mentions several of these; of whom, though Josephus do not expressly say that they called themselves the MESSIAS, yet he says that which is equivalent, that they undertook to rescue the people from the Roman yoke, which was the thing which the Jews expected the MESSIAS should do for them; and therefore we find Luke xxiv. 21. that the disciples that were going up to Emmaus, and knew not that CHRIST

SERM. was risen, and were doubtful what to think of him,
 CCXXXVIII because it was the third day, they say, "we hoped
 "this had been he that should have redeemed
 "Israel;" that is, they hoped this had been the
 MESSIAS, that being it seems a common periph-
 rasis of the MESSIAS, that he was "he that
 "was to deliver Israel." Such as one Theudas
 pretended himself to be; not that Theudas of whom
 Gamaliel speaks, Acts xv. 36. but another of the
 same name, who about twelve years after our SA-
 VIOUR's death, when Cuspius Fadus was procura-
 tor of Judea, rose and seduced the people; of whom
 Josephus, lib. 18, gives this account, that "being
 "a forcerer, he rose up and deceived many;"
 which is the very expression our SAVIOUR useth,
 "they shall deceive many." This man persuaded
 a great multitude to bring their goods and follow
 him down the river Jordan, which he promised by
 his command to divide, and to give them a safe
 passage over it. But whilst he was thus playing the
 fool among the people, Fadus sent some forces, and
 surprised him and his company, killing many of
 them, and cutting off his head, and so there was an
 end of him.

Such likewise were those impostors, which about
 two and twenty years after our SAVIOUR's death
 were so rife among them, when Felix was governor
 of Judea; of whom Josephus tells us, that they
 drew multitudes after them into the wilderness, pro-
 mising to work great signs and wonders before them;
 which agrees exactly with the description which
 our SAVIOUR gives of "the false Christs and false
 "prophets," verse 24. where he says, that they
 should shew "great signs and wonders," σημεία καὶ
 τέρατα,

τέρατα, the very words which Josephus useth. And SERM.
verse 26. "If they shall say to you, he is in the ^{CCXXXVIII}
"desert, go not forth;" answerable to what Josephus says, "that they drew many after them into
"the wilderness."

Such an one likewise was the Egyptian prophet, who, as Josephus tells, came to Jerusalem much about the same time, and persuaded the people to follow him to mount Olivet, persuading them, that from thence they should see the walls of Jerusalem fall, and so might enter the city. Which Felix understanding, sent soldiers, and slew and took several of them, but the Egyptian impostor himself made an escape; which is the reason of that saying of the chief captain to Paul, Acts xxi. 38. "Art not thou
"the Egyptian which before these days madest an
"uproar? &c."

Such another was that impostor (if he be distinct from the former) who, as Josephus tells us, about three years after, under Festus Portius the Procurator, deceived the people with vain promises of deliverance, and ease from their oppressions, if they would follow him into the wilderness; but Festus sent soldiers, and destroyed him and his company.

"And shall deceive many," that is, by raising false expectations in the people, shall draw them into ruin, as Josephus tells us they did many of the Jews. And this our SAVIOUR elsewhere foretold as a just judgment of God upon them, for rejecting of him who was the true MESSIAS, John v. 43. "I am
"come in my FATHER's name, and ye receive me
"not: if another should come in his own name, him
"ye will receive."

Secondly,

SERM.

CCXXXVIII

Secondly, the next sign our SAVIOUR gives, is
 “ wars and rumours of wars, famines, pestilences,
 “ earthquakes,” &c. ver. 6, 7. And “ ye shall hear
 “ of wars and rumours of wars.” About this time
 the Jews began to be set upon in several places, by
 the command of the emperor, and many thousands
 of them were slain at Alexandria and Babylon, as
 Josephus tells us. And there was a fear, and rumour
 of a general war denounced against them by Caius
 Caligula the emperor, unless they would receive his
 statue into the temple. Upon this rumour the whole
 nation was in great astonishment, insomuch that the
 Jews left their business, and neglected to till their
 grounds, expecting the Romans would have fallen
 upon them; of which consternation, both Josephus
 and Philo give us a particular account.

Our SAVIOUR adds, “ see that ye be not trou-
 “ bled; for these things must come to pass, but the
 “ end is not yet;” that is, when you see the nation
 in this danger from the Romans, be not ye troubled,
 as the Jews will be, thinking now will be the ruin
 of the nation. This and many other things will
 happen, before the final end come. And accordingly
 it fell out. For so Josephus and Tacitus tell us, that
 this storm was blown over by the sudden death of
 the emperor.

Verse 7. “ Nation shall rise up against nation.”
 Which happened under Claudius and Nero, the two
 next Roman emperors, when in several cities, as Ce-
 sarea, Ptolemais, and many others, the Jews and those
 of other nations that inhabited those cities, fell upon
 and destroyed one another, as may be read at large in
 Josephus.

“ And

“ And kingdom against kingdom.” This seems SERM.
CCXXXVIII
to refer to the several provinces, or tetrarchies in Palestine, which were also call'd kingdoms, which at this time had cruel wars against one another; as the Jews and the Galileans against the Samaritans, and several others that Josephus speaks of.

“ And there shall be famines and pestilences.” Accordingly Josephus tells us, that under Claudius Cæsar there was a great famine in Judea, namely, that which was prophesied of by Agabus, Act xi. 28. And this Grotius very probably supposeth to be the reason why St. Paul in his epistles, written about that time, is so earnest with the christians to send relief to the saints at Jerusalem. Pestilences they usually follow famine; “ and earthquakes in divers places;” which happened in the times of Claudius and Nero. Philostratus speaks of a great earthquake that happened in Crete in the time of Claudius, and in several other places, as Smyrna, Chios, Samos, &c. not long before the destruction of Jerusalem: Tacitus speaks of one in Asia about the same time. And tho' these were at a greater distance, than the other signs which our SAVIOUR mentions; yet the Jews could not but hear of them, because several of the nations were dispersed into some of those places.

Thirdly, “ fearful sights and signs from heaven.” So St. Luke chap. xxi. ver. 11. “ There shall be “ fearful sights, and great signs from heaven.” Josephus gives us a clear comment upon this, Bell. Jud. lib. 7. says he, “ this wretched people believed impostors and counterfeits, but those great “ signs and prodigies which did forerun their desolation, they neither minded, nor believed.” A little

SERM. little before their destruction (he tells us) there hung
 {ccxxxviii} over their city a fiery sword, which continued for a
 year together. A little before their rebellion against
 the Romans, there appeared a comet, which shined
 so clear in the temple, and about the altar, as if it
 had been day. And the same day an heifer, that was
 led to be sacrificed brought forth a lamb in the middle
 of the temple. The eastern gate of the temple, which
 was of massy brass, and very heavy, and could scarce
 be shut by the strength of twenty men, and was con-
 stantly made fast with strong locks, and bars, flew
 open at midnight; which when it was told to the
 magistrate, and he came to see it, they could scarce
 get strength enough to shut it. One evening, not
 long before their desolation, there was seen in the
 air chariots and armies hovering over the city. At
 the feast of pentecost, the priests going one night
 into the temple, according to their custom, first heard
 a noise, and afterward a sudden voice, saying, "let
 " us go hence." And which is very terrible, one
 Jesus a plain country-man, four years before any
 troubles began, when the city was in a deep peace,
 came up to Jerusalem, and upon one of their festi-
 vals, began to cry out with a loud voice, "a voice
 " from the east, a voice from the west, a voice from
 " the four winds, a voice against Jerusalem and the
 " temple, a voice against bridegrooms and brides, a
 " voice against the people." And thus he went about
 crying day and night; and being seized on by the
 magistrate, and punished, and tortured, he would
 not give over, but still went crying about, wo, wo
 to Jerusalem; and thus he continued for seven years
 and five months together, and was neither weary nor
 hoarse until the city was besieged, and then he was
 quiet;

quiet; but one time went up upon the walls, and SERM.
cried with a loud voice, "wo, wo to the city, and ^{CCXXXVIII}
" the temple, and the people," and added, "wo
" also to myself;" and immediately was struck dead
by a stone out of a cross-bow.

Were not these "fearful fights, and great signs
" from heaven?" And these we have all related by
one of the most prudent historians, who lived at
that very time, and that very place; and he says,
that many were alive when he wrote, and could attest
all this.

Verse 8. "All these are the beginnings of sorrows."
The scripture usually compares the greatest sufferings
and afflictions to "the pains of a woman in travail,"
to which our SAVIOUR here alludes, and says, "these
" were but the first pangs, nothing to those throws
" which should come at last."

These are three of the signs forerunning the de-
struction of Jerusalem, which were predicted by our
SAVIOUR. There are yet five more, which I reserve
for my next discourse on this subject.

S E R M O N C C X X X I X .

The evidences of the truth of the
christian religion.

2 COR. iv. 3, 4.

*But if our gospel be hid, it is hid to them that are lost :
in whom the GOD of this world hath blinded the
minds of them which believe not, lest the light of the
glorious gospel of CHRIST, who is the image of GOD,
should shine unto them.*

SERM.
CCXXXIX.

The sixth
sermon on
this text.

THE fourth evidence, which those who lived
in our SAVIOUR's time had of his divine
authority, was the spirit of prophecy proved
to be in him, and made good by the accomplishment
of his predictions.

I have given five instances of our SAVIOUR's predictions, and am now treating on the fourth of them, viz. his foretelling the destruction of Jerusalem with the circumstances of it.

In explaining the particulars of this prophecy, I proposed three things to be considered.

1. OUR SAVIOUR's general prediction of the siege, and total destruction of Jerusalem and the temple.

2. His prediction of the signs that should fore-run it.

3. His prediction of the concomitant and subsequent circumstances of it.

I am

I am upon the second of these, viz. our SAVIOUR'S SERM. prediction of the signs that should forerun the destruction of Jerusalem; three of which I have dispatched, and now proceed to those which remain. CCXXXIX.

Fourthly, another sign which our SAVIOUR foretold, as a forerunner of the destruction of Jerusalem, was persecution of the christians. "They shall deliver you to be afflicted, and shall kill you." St. Mark expresseth it more particularly, Mark xiii. 9. "but take heed to your selves: for they shall deliver you up to councils, and in the synagogues ye shall be beaten, and ye shall be brought before rulers and kings for my sake, for a testimony against them." And these did partly happen before the forementioned calamities, and partly upon them: but our SAVIOUR first reckons by themselves the common calamities of the nation; and then he comes to those which did concern his disciples and followers; and this follows very fitly upon the former more general calamities. For we find the fathers in their apologies every where complaining, that the Jews and Heathens laid the blame of all the judgments and calamities which befel them, as famine, pestilence, and earthquakes, upon the christians, as the causes of them; and from this pretence they many times took occasion to persecute them.

"They shall deliver you to be afflicted." This was fulfilled in delivering some of the apostles to be whipped and imprisoned by the chief priests and rulers, as Peter and John; or giving them up to the Roman power, as they did James and Peter to Herod; Paul to Gallio, Felix and Festus, and last of all to Nero.

SERM. "And shall kill you." St. Luke saith "some of
 CCXXXIX. "you;" for of others he saith "that not a hair of
 "their head should fall to the ground." Thus Stephen was killed by a popular tumult; and the two James's were put to death under colour of a judicial process; the one stoned by the council of the Jews, and the other put to death by Herod.

"And ye shall be hated of all nations for my name's sake." Which began under Nero, who, charging the christians with the burning of the city, as Tacitus tells us, when himself had set it on fire, tortured many of them as guilty of the fact. "For my name's sake." This was exactly fulfilled, in that the christians were so miserably persecuted for no other cause, but for being called christians. They did not punish them for opposing their idolatry, for that the Jews did as well as the christians, who yet escaped their malice; nor could they lay any other crime to their charge. Hence was that common saying among the heathens, *vir bonus Caius Sejus; tantummodò quòd christianus*.

Fifthly, and upon this persecution, the apostasy of many from christianity, verse 10. "Then shall many be offended;" that is, fall off from christianity because of these persecutions; as we read several did, Demas, Hermogenes, Phygellus, and probably several others.

"And they shall betray one another, and hate one another." Which was remarkably fulfilled in the sect of the Gnostics, who did not only decline persecution themselves, but joined with those that persecuted the christians, as ecclesiastical history tells us.

Sixthly, that likewise upon this occasion of persecution "many false prophets should arise, and de-

"ceive

“ceive many,” verse 11. which seems to refer to SERM. Simon Magus, who gave himself out to be “the ^{CCXXXIX.} “power of God;” and to the other heads of the gnostic sect. Ver. 12. “And the love of many “shall grow cold, because iniquity shall abound.” Which seems to refer likewise to the Gnostics, of whom St. John in his first epistle doth so frequently make mention of their name; as “he that saith I “know him, and keepeth not his commandments, “&c.” of whom he doth so much complain for want of love to their brethren.

Verse 13. “But he that shall endure to the end “shall be saved;” that is, he that shall continue constant in the profession of the faith, notwithstanding these persecutions, and apostasies, and false teachers that shall arise, “shall be saved.”

Seventhly, that there should be an universal publication of the gospel, before this great desolation should happen, verse 14. “And this gospel of the “kingdom shall be preached in all the world, for a “witness unto all nations.” And this was accomplished before the destruction of Jerusalem: for the gospel was published all over the Roman empire before that time: and that is it which is here meant by the world, in the same sense that Augustus is said by St. Luke, “to have taxed all the world.” And this is the very phrase which the Romans constantly used, calling the Roman empire, *imperium orbis terrarum*. And that the gospel was thus published, we may easily believe, if we consider how many were sent forth for this purpose, and what indefatigable pains they took in this work, especially St. Paul, who “preached from Jerusalem to Illyri- “cum,” which according to the account which he

SERM. gives of the journey, is computed to be no less than
 CCXXXIX. 2000 miles, and yet he made considerable stays in
 many places.

“ For a witness unto all nations ;” that is, that all nations might be convinced of the unreasonable obstinacy of the Jews, before God brought those dreadful calamities upon that nation.

“ And then shall the end come ;” that is, the final destruction of the Jews, the total desolation of the jewish church and commonwealth, according to the prophecy of Jacob, Gen. xlix. 10. which put these two signs together, “ that the scepter shall not depart from “ Judah, nor a lawgiver from between his feet until Shiloh come ; and unto him shall the gathering “ of the people be.”

Eighthly, the last and most immediate sign and forerunner which he gave of their destruction, is “ the standing of the abomination of desolation in “ the holy place.” Verse 15. “ When ye shall see “ the abomination of desolation spoken of by the “ prophet Daniel, standing in the holy place ; then “ let them which be in Judea flee into the mountains.” There is a great difference among expositors, what is here meant by “ the abomination of “ desolation standing in the holy place.” Some refer it to the statue of Adrian the emperor, placed where the temple was at Jerusalem. But that cannot be, because that was a long time after the destruction of Jerusalem, and therefore could not be given by our SAVIOUR for a sign and forerunner of it. Others (as Capellus) refer it to the faction of the zealots, which before Titus came to besiege Jerusalem, seized upon the temple, and profaned it by bloodshed and slaughter, and made so
 horrible

horrible a devastation in the city. And this would SERM.
 not be improbable, if St. Luke had not given us CCXXXIX.
 so clear an interpretation of it, Luke xxi. 20, 21.
 who instead of "the abomination of desolation,"
 mentioned by St. Matthew and St. Mark, puts the
 Roman armies. "And when ye shall see Jerusa-
 lem compassed with armies, then know that the
 desolation thereof is nigh. Then let them that are
 in Judea flee to the mountains." So that ac-
 cording to St. Luke, "the abomination of deso-
 lation standing in the holy place," is the Ro-
 man armies compassing Jerusalem: which therefore
 is called "the abomination of desolation," because
 it would cause so great a desolation among them.
 "when you see Jerusalem compassed with armies,
 then know that the desolation thereof is nigh:"
 and it is said "to stand in the holy place," because
 Jerusalem was the holy city, and so many furlongs
 about it were accounted holy. Now when the Ro-
 man army should approach within the limits of the
 holy ground, then "the abomination of desolation
 might be said to stand in the holy place:" but
 the word abomination seems particularly to refer to
 the Roman ensigns, upon which were the images of
 their emperors, which the Romans worshipped, as
 Suetonius expressly tells us; and Tacitus calls them
 their *bellorum dii*, their "gods of war." Now it
 was an abomination to the Jews to see these idols
 set up within the limits of the holy city. To which
 I may add what Josephus tells us afterward, that the
 Romans, after they had conquered the city, set up
 these ensigns in the ruins of the temple, and sacri-
 ficed to them.

SERM. Verse 15. "Then let them that be in Judea, flee
 CCXXXIX. "to the mountains; and let him which is on the
 "house-top, not come down to take any thing out
 "of his house; neither let him which is in the field,
 "return back to take his clothes," which are several
 expressions to signify what haste the christians would
 make, when they saw the Romans making so near ap-
 proaches to Jerusalem.

"Let them which are in Judea flee to the
 "mountains." Some refer this to the last siege by
 Titus; but I see no probability for that; for the
 Jews did not permit any to go out of the city.
 Others refer it to Vespasian's drawing his forces to-
 ward Jerusalem some time before the siege, but hear-
 ing of the death of Nero the emperor, he forbore to
 besiege it, 'till he had received orders from the new
 emperor; and that this was a warning to the chri-
 stians, and they took their opportunity then to flee
 into the mountains. But this could not be neither,
 because for a good while before, the faction of the
 zealots under John and Simon's faction, who lay
 without the city, did slay all who endeavoured to
 escape out of the city. If we limit these words to
 Jerusalem (which the text does not) the most pro-
 bable time was when Jerusalem was first compassed
 by the Roman army under Cestius Gallus, who af-
 terward withdrew his siege; and then indeed those
 that would, had liberty to flee away. And at this
 time Josephus doth say, that many did flee, foresee-
 ing the approaching danger. But there is no rea-
 son to confine it to Jerusalem; for our SAVIOUR's
 words are more large, "then let them that are in
 "Judea flee to the mountains." And if so, there
 is an express passage in Josephus to this purpose,
 that

that when Titus was drawing up his forces toward Jerusalem, a great number of those who were at Jericho went from thence εἰς τὰ ὄρη, into the mountainous places, and thereby consulted their own safety.

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Verse 15. "Let him that is on the house-top not come to take any thing from thence." Our SAVIOUR alludes to the fashion of the jewish houses, which had plain roofs, upon which they used to walk; and he bids them make such haste, that when they saw this sign, they should not think of saving any thing in their houses, but betake themselves presently to the mountains for safety.

Verse 16. "Neither let him that is in the field return back to take his cloaths." Another expression to signify what haste they should make from the approaching danger.

Verse 17. "But wo unto them that are with child, and to those that give suck in those days;" because of the impediment that this would be to their flight. Or possibly it may refer to the dreadful story, not paralleled in any place or age, which Josephus tells of one Mary, who in the time of the siege, out of very famine, boiled her sucking child, and eat it. And therefore St. Luke xxi. 23. does mention this of "the womens being with-child," not as an impediment to flight, but as an instance of the great calamity that should befall them, Luke xxi. 23. "But wo unto them that are with-child, and to them that give suck in those days: for there shall be great distress in the land, and wrath upon this people."

Verse 18. "But pray ye that your flight be not in the winter, nor on the sabbath-day." Not in winter,

SERM. winter, because of the hardness of the season, and ^{CCXXXIX.} the difficulty of travelling and living upon the mountains: "nor on the sabbath-day." This concerned the christian Jews as well as others, most of which observed the jewish law and rites after our SAVIOUR's death, till the desolation of the jewish state and temple, as appears out of the history of the acts. For though St. Paul stood for the liberty of the Gentiles; yet it appears from Acts xxi. 21. that he vindicated himself from the calumny or aspersion which was cast upon him, as if he taught the Jews which were among the Gentiles, to forsake Moses, and that they ought not to circumcise their children, nor to walk after their customs. So that the christian Jews retaining the observance of the jewish sabbath, upon which it was not lawful to go any farther than a sabbath-day's journey, which was scarce two miles; if the danger should happen at that time (as the Romans usually took advantages to make all their onsets on that day, knowing the superstition of the Jews on that point) they must needs have been in great perplexity.

Having thus particularly treated of the signs which our SAVIOUR foretold, as the forerunners of the destruction of Jerusalem; I proceed,

3. To consider the concomitant and subsequent circumstances of it. As,

1. The unparalleled greatness of their calamity.
2. The arising of false christs.
3. Their being led into captivity, and dispersed up and down in the world.
4. Their continuance in this captivity and dispersed state out of their country, till the gospel had had its course among the Gentiles.

1. The

1. The unparalleled greatness of their calamity and destruction, verse 19. “ For then shall be great tribulation, such as was not from the beginning of the world to this time, neither ever shall be.” SERM.
ccxxxix.
This is a very material circumstance in this prophesy, that the calamity of the Jews should be so strange and unparalleled as never was in the world before: for though it might easily have been foretold from the temper of the people, which was prone to sedition, that they were very like to provoke the Romans against them; yet there was no probability that all things should have come to that extremity: for it was not the design of the Roman government to destroy any of those provinces which were under them, but only to keep them in subjection, and reduce them by reasonable severity in case of revolt. But that such a calamity should have happened to them under Titus, who was the mildest, and farthest from severity of all mankind, nothing was more unlikely; and that any people should conspire to their own ruin, and so blindly and obstinately run themselves into such calamities, as made them the pity of their enemies, was the most incredible thing; so that nothing less than a prophetic spirit could have foretold so contingent and improbable a thing as this was.

St. Luke expresseth the dismal calamity that should happen to them in other words, but much to the same sense, Luke xxi. 22, 23. “ For these be the days of vengeance, that all things which are written may be fulfilled. But woe unto them that are with child, and to them that give suck, in those days: for there shall be great distress in the land, and wrath upon this people.” And to this Josephus fully

SERM. fully gives testimony, as will appear both by what he
 {^{ccxxxix.} says in general concerning their calamity, and by the
 particular account of their miseries and sufferings.

(1.) In general he tells us, that “ never was any
 “ age so fruitful of misery as this was ;” and almost
 in our SAVIOUR’s words, in his preface to his books
 of the siege of Jerusalem, he says, “ that all the
 “ calamities that had fallen upon any nation from
 “ the beginning of the world, were but small, in
 “ comparison to what happened to the nation of the
 “ Jews in that age.” And in his sixth book, he says,
 “ that as there was never any nation so wicked, so
 “ never any nation suffered such calamitous acci-
 “ dents.” But this will best appear,

(2.) By a brief and particular enumeration of
 their calamities. Not to mention the burning and de-
 stroying of several of their chief cities, as Zabulon,
 Gadara, Japha, Jotopatah, Joppa, and several others ;
 I shall insist chiefly upon the sufferings of the people
 themselves, by their tumults and seditions against the
 Romans. Before the coming of Vespasian, there
 were slain at Jerusalem and in Syria 2000, at Aska-
 lon 2500, at Ptolemais 2000, at Alexandria 50000,
 at Joppa 8400, at mount Asamon 2000, at Damaf-
 cus 10000, and afterward at Askalon by Antonius a
 Roman commander 18000 ; in all, almost one hun-
 dred thousand.

By Vespasian in Galilee and other parts, very
 great numbers ; at Japha 15000, at mount Ge-
 rizim 11600, at Jotapatah (the city of which Jo-
 sephus our historian was governor) 40000, at Joppa
 4000, at Tarichæa near upon 8000, at Gamala
 9000, at Giscala 2000 ; in all fourscore and ten
 thousand.

After-

Afterward by their own seditions at Jerusalem 8500 at several times; and afterward by the faction of the zealots 12000 of the chiefest and noblest of the citizens were slain at one time; at the river Jordan by Placidus 13000, besides many thousands drowned, so that the river was filled up almost with dead carcases. At two towns in Idumea by Vespasian 10000, at Gerasa 1000; in all forty-five thousand.

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Whilst Vespasian was thus wasting the cities of Judea, the faction of the zealots filled all places at Jerusalem, even the temple itself, with continual slaughters; and after they had conquered Ananus, who stood for the people against the zealots, and got all into their own hands, they were divided into parties, and made slaughter of one another; and one party let in Simon, who headed a seditious multitude, which he brought out of the country; and after that they were subdivided into three parties, John's, and Eleazer's, and Simon's, which held several parts of the city, and day and night continued to destroy one another; in which seditions all their granaries of corn, and magazines of arms were burnt; so that though provision had been laid in the city, that would have sufficed for several years, yet before they came to be besieged by Titus, they were almost reduced to famine.

And after they were besieged, at the first they united a little against the Romans; yet after a few days, they divided again into factions, and more of them were slain by one another's hand, and with more cruelty than by the Romans; insomuch that Titus the general of the Romans wept several times, to consider the misery they brought upon themselves, and their very enemies were more pitiful toward them, than they to one another.

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After two months siege, the famine began to rage within, and then all manner of cruelties were exercised by the soldiers upon that miserable people; and at last they were brought to such necessity, that many endeavoured to flee out to the enemy, and yet were not permitted; but as many as were suspected of any endeavour to escape, were cruelly killed. It is not to be imagined what barbarous inhumanities, in those straits, all exercised one toward another; snatching the meat out of one another's mouths, and from their dearest friends, and their very children.

And so obstinate were they, that neither those calamities which they suffered, nor the severity of the Romans in crucifying many thousands of them before the walls, and threatening them all with the same death, in case they would not yield, in ripping open the bowels of two thousand of them in a night, who fled out of Jerusalem, upon a report that they had swallowed gold (as many of them had) Josephus, lib. 6. cap. 15. nor all the kind messages of Titus, offering peace to them, and using all manner of intreaties and persuasions not to run upon their own ruin, could prevail with them to accept of a peace. And thus they continued, till by famine and force the city was taken, and then their provocation of the Romans to cruelty toward those they had got into their power, was so great, that Titus was not able to withhold the soldiers from exercising great cruelties towards them.

In short, from the beginning of the siege, to the taking of the city, there were famished and slain by the factions among themselves, and by the Romans 1100000, the greatest number, and with the saddest circumstances, that is to be read of in any story.

Was

Was not this “a time of great tribulation?” were SERM.
not these “days of vengeance” indeed? was there ccxxxix.
ever a sadder accomplishment of any prediction, than
these words of our SAVIOUR had?

And after all this, the temple was burnt and made
desolate, the whole city destroyed, and all their
whole land seized by the Roman emperor, and the
remnant of the people in other parts of the nation
were prosecuted with great severity. Great numbers
of Jews were destroyed at the taking of the castle of
Herodion, and Machærus, and Massada, and in the
thickets or woods of Jandes. And there were great
slaughters of the Jews in other parts, at Antioch, in
all places about Alexandria and Thebes, and at
Cyrene, so that it was visible that there was “wrath
“upon his people.”

Ver. 22. “And except that the LORD had
“shortened those days, no flesh should be saved;
“but for the elects sake, whom he hath chosen, he
“hath shortened the days;” that is, if those calami-
ties had lasted a little longer, there would not one
Jew have been left alive; “but for the elects sake,”
that is, for the sake of those christians who were left
among them, “those days were shortened:” God
inclining the heart of Titus to shew pity toward the
remnant, and not to suffer the nations to exercise any
more cruelty toward them; particularly at Antioch,
(the first seat of the christians) Josephus tells us, that
when Titus came thither, the people petitioned him
earnestly that they might expel the Jews, but he told
them that was unreasonable, for now their country
was laid waste, there was no place for them to go to.
Thus we see how “for the elects sake those days
“were shortened.”

2. Another

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2. Another circumstance which was to follow the destruction of Jerusalem, was, “ the arising of false Christs, and false prophets,” ver. 23, 24. “ And then, if any man shall say to you, lo, here is CHRIST or, lo, he is there! believe him not. For false Christs, and false prophets shall rise, and shall shew signs and wonders.” Such was Jonathan, who presently after the destruction of Jerusalem, as Josephus tells us, drew many into the wilderness of Cyrene, pretending that he would shew signs and wonders to them; therefore our SAVIOUR adds, ver. 25, 26. “ Behold I have told you before. Wherefore if they shall say unto you, behold he is in the desert; go not forth.” There appeared in Egypt, Crete, and Cyprus, several other impostors, who gave out themselves to be Christs and false prophets, who applied the prophecies of the old testament to these counterfeit Messias’s; as they did that of Balaam, concerning “ a star coming out of Jacob” to Barchochebas, because his name signified “ the son of a star.” And this was a notorious impostor, in the time of Adrian the emperor, not many years after the destruction of Jerusalem, about 20, (as I remember) Eusebius counts; he had a great multitude followed him, which put to death many christians, because they would not renounce CHRIST, and join with them against the Romans, and that was the cause of the death of some hundred thousands of them.

3. Another subsequent circumstance, was the Jews being led into captivity, and dispersed into all nations. This St. Luke adds, Luke xxi. 24. “ They shall be led away captive into all nations.” I need not prove this out of history, we see the effect of it to this day.

4. That

4. That they should continue in this captivity and dispersed state, and their city remain in the power of the Gentiles, “ until the times of the Gentiles were fulfilled.” So also St. Luke tells us, verse 24. “ They shall be led away captive into all nations, “ and Jerusalem shall be troden down of the Gentiles, until the times of the Gentiles be fulfilled,” that is, till the gospel have had its course among the nations. And thus it is still with them at this day ; Jerusalem is in the hands of other nations, and the captivity of the Jews continues ; and when it shall end, God alone knows.

Having thus explained the particulars of our SAVIOUR’s prediction, concerning the destruction of Jerusalem, I should in the next place proceed to make some reflexions upon this prediction, and its punctual accomplishment ; but this I reserve for the following discourse.

S E R M O N CCXL.

The evidences of the truth of the
christian religion.

2 COR. iv. 3, 4.

*But if our gospel be hid, it is hid to them that are lost :
in whom the GOD of this world hath blinded the
minds of them which believe not, lest the light of the
glorious gospel of CHRIST, who is the image of GOD,
should shine unto them.*

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The fe-
venth ser-
mon on
this text.

IN discoursing on the fourth evidence, which those who lived in our SAVIOUR'S time had of his divine authority, viz. the spirit of prophesy proved to be in him, and made good by the accomplishment of his predictions, I came to consider that remarkable prediction of the destruction of Jerusalem.

In doing this, I proposed three things :

First, to explain the series and order of this prediction.

Secondly, to consider the particulars of it, as we find them in the xxivth of St. Matthew, compared with the other two evangelists.

Thirdly, to make some reflexions upon this prediction, and its punctual accomplishment. The two former of these I have dispatched, and now proceed to what remains, viz. the

Third thing I propounded, which was to make some reflexions upon this prediction of our SAVI-

OUR's, concerning the destruction of Jerusalem, and the punctual accomplishment of it. And now that I have been so large in the explication of this prophesy, I shall make use of this argument farther than I intended, not only to shew that those who lived in that age, and saw our SAVIOUR's predictions so punctually answered by the event, might from hence be satisfied of the prophetic spirit of our SAVIOUR; and consequently of his divine authority; but likewise to shew of what force to the conviction of the Jews this consideration is, of the destruction of Jerusalem, and that long train of miserable consequences which followed upon it, and have lasted to this day.

And the reflexions I shall make upon this, shall be these :

I. That nothing less than a prophetic spirit could so punctually have foretold so many contingents and improbable things, as this prediction of our SAVIOUR's does contain in it. Such were some of those signs which did forerun the destruction of Jerusalem; as the great famine which happened under Claudius; the several great earthquakes under Claudius and Nero; the universal publication of the gospel all over the Roman empire in so short a space; those wonderful sights, and prodigious signs from heaven, so strange as are not to be paralleled in any history. And such likewise were the circumstances of the destruction of the city and the temple; as that it should be an utter desolation, which was strangely accomplished, when, as Josephus tells us, the very mountain upon which the temple stood, was almost burnt up and consumed with the fierceness of the fire; and the Roman history

SERM. tory gives an account of the plucking up of the
 CCXL. very foundations of the temple by Turnus Rufus :
 but the most remarkable circumstance of all, which
 is so fully expressed by our SAVIOUR in this prediction, was the strange and unexampled calamities which should attend this destruction, such as never befel any people before, which our SAVIOUR foretels in these words, “ then shall be great tribulation, “ such as was not from the beginning of the world “ to this time ; nor ever shall be.” And never had any words a more sad and full accomplishment than this part of our SAVIOUR’s prophecy had, in those woful miseries which befel that people by civil and intestine seditions, and the utmost extremity that famine could reduce a people to ; besides the cruelties of a foreign enemy. No history makes mention of so vast a number of men, that in so short a time did perish in such sad circumstances ; fourteen or fifteen hundred thousand within less than a year’s space ; and more of these by far cruelly murder’d by one another’s hands, than by the Romans. So that these were “ days of vengeance,” and “ of great “ tribulation,” such as the world had never seen before, and “ if they had not been shortened, no flesh “ could have been saved,” as our SAVIOUR adds in the prophecy ; if things had gone on at that rate a little longer, not one of the jewish nation would have been left alive.

Now that our SAVIOUR should foretel so punctually the sad calamity of this people, I take to be one of the most material circumstances of this prophecy ; and to be a thing so contingent and unlikely, that it could not have been foreseen, but by divine inspiration. For though one might easily
 have

have foretold from the temper of the people, which SERM.
was prone to sedition, and very impatient of the CCXL.
Roman government, that the Jews were very likely
in a short time to provoke the Romans against them ;
yet there was no probability at all, that things should
have come to that extremity ; for it was not in the
design of the Roman government to destroy any
of their provinces : but that such a calamity should
have happened unto them under Titus, who was the
mildest, and farthest from cruelty of all mankind,
nothing was more unlikely ; that ever any people
should have been so befotted, as the Jews were at
that time, and have so madly conspired together to
their own ruin, as they did ; that they should so
blindly and obstinately run themselves into such ca-
lamities, as made them the pity of their very ene-
mies, was the most incredible thing in the world
Nothing but a prophetic spirit could have fore-
told an event so contingent, and so extremely im-
probable.

II. Not only those who lived in that age were
capable of satisfaction concerning the accomplish-
ment of this prediction of our SAVIOUR ; but that
we also might receive full satisfaction concerning this,
the providence of God hath so ordered it as to pre-
serve to us a more punctual and credible history of
the destruction of Jerusalem, than there is of any
other matter whatsoever so long since done.

And this is more considerable, than possibly at first
we may imagine. For,

I. We have this matter related, not by a chri-
stian (who might have been suspected of partiali-
ty, and a design to have paralleled the event with
our SAVIOUR's prediction) but by a Jew both by

SERM. nation and religion, who seems designedly to have avoided, as much as possibly he could, the very mention of the christian name, and all particulars relating to our SAVIOUR, tho' no historian was ever more punctual in all other things.

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2. We have this matter related by one that was an eye-witness of all those sad calamities that befel the nation of the Jews, and during the war in Galilee against Vespasian, was one of their chief commanders, and being taken by the Romans, was in their camp all the time that Jerusalem was besieged.

3. As he was an eye-witness, and so able to give the truest account of those matters, so hath he always had the repute of a most faithful historian. Joseph Scaliger, who was a very good judge in these matters, gives this character of him, that he was *diligentissimus* καὶ Φιλαληδέας, *omnium scriptorum*; "the most painful historian, and the greatest lover of truth, of any that he had ever read;" *de quo nos hoc audacter dicimus, non solum in rebus judaicis, sed etiam in externis, tutius illi credi quàm omnibus græcis & latinis historicis*; "of whom, says he, I might confidently affirm, that not only in the jewish affairs, but in all foreign matters, one may more safely rely upon his credit, than upon all the greek and latin historians put together."

4. There is no ancient history extant, that relates any matter with so much particularity of circumstances, as Josephus does that of the Jewish wars, especially the siege and destruction of Jerusalem.

5. That the providence of God may appear the more remarkable in this history, which is the only punctual one that hath been preserved down to us of this great action, it will be worth our observation

vation to consider, how remarkably this person was preserved for the writing of this history.

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When Vespasian made war upon Galilee, Josephus was chief commander there, and was besieged there by Vespasian, in the city Jotapata, which after a long and stout resistance being taken by the Romans, he with forty more hid themselves in a cave, where at last they were discovered by the Romans; which Vespasian hearing of, sent and offered them life; and Josephus would have accepted of the offer, but the rest would not permit him to yield himself, but threatened to kill him; and when by no persuasions he could take them off from this obstinate resolution, he was glad to propound this to them, that they should cast lots, two by two, who should die first, and he that had the second lot should kill the first and the next him, and so on, and the last should kill himself. The providence of God preserved Josephus and another to the last lot; and when all the rest were killed, Josephus persuaded him to yield himself up to the Romans, and so they two escaped with their lives, by which remarkable providence he was preserved to write this history.

III. It seems very plain from this relation which Josephus gives, that the Jewish nation was remarkably devoted by God to destruction, and most fatally hardened and blinded to their own ruin. This Josephus every where takes notice of, that there was a sad and black fate hung over the nation, and God seemed to have determined their ruin. And after the destruction of Jerusalem, when the castle of Massada was besieged by the Romans, Eleazer the governor, in his speech to the soldiers, reckons up the sad

SERM. symptoms of God's displeasure against them; and
 CCXL. tells them, that from the beginning of the war it was
 easy for any one to conjecture that God in great wrath
 had devoted the nation, which he formerly loved, to
 destruction.

And indeed all along the hand of God was very visible against them; for when in the beginning of their rebellion, Cestus Gallus the Roman commander had an opportunity to have taken Jerusalem, and to have put an end to the war; Josephus tells us, that God being angry with them would not permit it, but did reserve them for a greater and sadder destruction. And afterward, when Vespasian renewed the war against them, Josephus tells us, that he used all kind of earnest persuasion with his countrymen to prevent their ruin by submitting to the Roman government; but they were obstinate, and would not hearken to any moderate counsels. And when the sedition of the zealots began in Jerusalem, Josephus takes notice that all the wisest men among them, and those who were most likely, by their interest, and moderation, to have saved the city, were first of all cut off by the zealots; so that there were none left to persuade the people to moderate things.

They provoked the Romans against them all manner of ways; their seditions among themselves continued when the enemy was before their walls; and when in probability they might have held out so long as to have wearied the Romans, by their own seditions they burnt all their granaries, and provisions of corn, and magazines of arms, as if they had consulted the advantage of the Romans against themselves; and which was very remarkable, Josephus tells us, that before the siege, the fountain of Siloam

was almost dried up, and all the springs about Jerusalem, so that water bore a great price; but as soon as Titus came before Jerusalem, the springs brake out again, and there never was greater plenty; which if it had not happened, the Roman armies could very hardly have subsisted. And after the temple was destroyed, when Titus would have given John and Simon, and the rest of the zealots their lives, they would not submit, but were all destroyed by their own obstinacy. At Massada, rather than yield to the Romans, 900 men, women and children, killed one another; so that when the Romans entered the castle, they found them all dead except one woman and a child, that had hid themselves.

Philostratus tells us, that when some of the nearer nations would have crowned Titus for his victories over the Jews, he refused it, saying, that he deserved nothing upon that account, for it was not his work, but God had made him the instrument of his wrath against that people. So that there were never greater acknowledgements of a divine hand against any people, than at this time against the Jews. Never was there greater courage and contempt of death in any people, and yet they were conquered by numbers much inferior to them. Never was any soldier so merciful as Titus was, and so solicitous to have spared the effusion of blood; and yet he was necessitated against his nature to exercise great cruelties toward them. Many times he endeavoured by the most severe inhibitions to restrain the cruelties of the soldiers toward them; and when he found that they ript open the bowels of the Jews who fled out of Jerusalem, in hopes to find gold which they had swallowed, he was much enraged against the soldiers,
and

SERM.

CCXL.

SERM. and would have put all to death that were engaged
 CCXL. in that cruelty, but that he found them so many ;
 and notwithstanding this, when he forbad the like
 cruelty to be exercised for the future, under the most
 severe penalties, yet Josephus says, that the soldiers
 did not forbear privately to do it ; and tho' in other
 cases, such a severe prohibition would have taken
 place, yet, says he, because God had devoted that
 people to ruin, all the ways which Titus used for the
 saving of them, turned to their destruction, lib. 6.
 cap. 15. Nay there was as much blood shed by the
 dissensions among themselves, between those who de-
 sired peace with the Romans, and those that would
 not hearken to it, as by the Romans. So much
 reason was there for that passionate wish of our
 SAVIOUR's concerning Jerusalem, " O that thou
 " hadst known, in this thy day, the things which
 " belong to thy peace ! but now they are hid from
 " thine eyes." Never was any nation so infatuated ;
 never were " the things that tended to peace," so
 strangely hid from any people, as from the Jews.

IV. It must needs be, that it was for some very
 great sin that God sent those dreadful calamities up-
 on that nation. Josephus says, that it was sure for
 some greater impiety than that nation were guilty of,
 when they were carried away captive to Babylon.
 Nay, he says that the sins of Sodom and Gomorrah,
 were but small in comparison of those the Jews were
 guilty of ; so that he says, that they were so ripe for
 destruction, that if the Roman army had not come
 when it did, he did verily believe that either an
 earthquake would have swallowed up the city, or a
 deluge overflown them, or fire from heaven have
 consumed them ; which is very much the same with
 that

that the apostle says of them, 1 Theff. ii. 16. That SERM.
they were "filling up the measure of their sins," CCXL.
"that wrath might come upon them to the ut-
"termost."

Now what can we imagine their great sin should be at that time? all along the history of the old testament, usually the great sin whereby they provoked God, was their idolatry, for which God sent many judgments upon them, and at last sold them into captivity. But when this desolation came upon them, and for a long time before, even ever after the captivity, they had been free from that great transgression, and were mightily bent against idolatry, so that they would rather die than commit that sin.

The account which Josephus gives of their sin, was their intestine seditions, and the cruelties and profanations of the temple that were consequent upon them. But that this could not be the original provocation is plain, because by the acknowledgment of Josephus and the Jews themselves, this was the greatest judgment and calamity that came upon them; yea, much greater than any thing which they suffered by the Romans; yea, so great, that it rendered them the pity of their very enemies; and when the Romans would have granted peace to them, and gladly have put an end to those miseries they saw them involved in, yet they continued their intestine seditions, and would not be taken off from destroying one another.

Let them then give us any probable account, for what great sin it was, that God first gave them up to this great judgment of an industrious endeavour to destroy one another: or if they cannot, let them believe the account which the history of the new testament

SERM. ment gives of it, and the truth whereof was so re-
 CCXL. markably confirmed by the fulfilling of our SAVI-
 OUR's predictions against them. The apostle gives
 a clear account of their sin, in the forementioned
 place, 1 Theff. ii. 15, 16. that it was because " they
 " had killed the LORD JESUS, and their own pro-
 " phets, and persecuted the apostles : " by these steps
 they " filled up their sins, and wrath came upon
 " them to the uttermost."

V. The punishment that was inflicted upon them
 hath very shrewd marks and signatures upon it, from
 which it is easy to conjecture, for what sin it was
 that they were thus punished. Titus laid siege to
 Jerusalem at the very same time and season that he
 Jews crucified CHRIST, namely, at the time of the
 passover; and the very day that he began his siege,
 he crucified one before their walls, and afterward,
 almost the only cruelty that the Romans exercised
 toward them by the comand and permission of Ti-
 tus, was crucifixion; insomuch that sometimes five
 hundred were crucified in a day, till they wanted
 wood for crosses. So that they who earnestly cried
 out against our SAVIOUR, crucify, crucify, had at
 last enough; GOD made them " eat the fruit of
 " their own ways, and filled them with their own
 " devices;" and they who had bought CHRIST for
 thirty pieces of silver, were afterward themselves sold
 at a lower rate.

VI. Their religion was remarkably struck at, and
 affronted, as if GOD intended to put an end to that
 dispensation, and to abrogate their law. Most of
 their great calamities happened to them upon the
 sabbath-day, and upon their great festivals. Cestius
 Gallus sat down with his army before Jerusalem on
 the

the sabbath. Titus besieged them at the time of the SERM.
passover. And Jerusalem was taken, (as Dio in his CCXL.
Roman history observes) on the sabbath-day, that
day for which the Jews have so great a veneration.
The zealots profaned the temple by making it a gar-
rison, and by the rapine and bloodshed committed
in it; they brought the priesthood into contempt,
by choosing the meanest of the people into the
highest offices; they turned the materials of the
temple into instruments of war. The Romans
themselves were as much grieved to see how the
Jews profaned the temple, as the Jews themselves
ought to have been, if it had been so profaned by
the Romans; they are the very words of Jose-
phus. And though Titus gave express orders, and
used great endeavours to have saved the temple,
and hazarded himself to have quenched it when it
was on fire; yet he could not do it, but it was burnt
to the ground: and afterward when the priests came
to him, and supplicated to him for their lives con-
trary to his usual clemency, he commanded them to
be slain, saying they came too late; that it was fit
they should perish with the temple, and now that
was destroyed, for the sake of which they should have
been saved, he saw no reason to spare them. After-
ward the Roman ensigns were set up upon the ruins
of the temple, and the soldiers sacrificed to them;
and their law was carried in triumph at Rome before
Vespasian and Titus.

These were as great signs as could be, that God
had a design to abrogate and put a period to that
administration; especially if we take in this, which
Ammianus Marcellinus a heathen historian tells us,
that this temple could never be rebuilt, though it was
attempted

SERM. attempted by the Jews several times, and that when-
 CCXL. ever they went about to lay the foundation, fire broke
 out of the foundation and consumed the workmen.

I will but add one circumstance more, to shew that that dispensation was at an end. God seemed to have wholly given over his particular care of that people, and to have no longer regard to the covenant made with them, in which he had promised, that when they came up three times a year, from all parts of the land, to serve the LORD, he would so order things by his providence, that the enemy should make no advantage of their absence from their borders; nay, the enemy should not then desire their land: and yet notwithstanding this, at the time of the passover, when the whole nation were met at Jerusalem, Titus came upon them, and inclosed them all in the city.

VII. and lastly, consider how God hath pursued the Jews with great severity ever since, making them to be stigmatized and hated in all nations; great cruelties and oppressions have frequently been exercised toward them; and by a strange providence God hath kept them distinct from other people, that they might remain as a monument of his displeasure; and considering how other colonies of people have fallen in, and been mixt with the inhabitants in an age or two, so as they could never be kept distinct for any long time; that the Jews for 1600 years, should still remain so, as it is an argument of the special providence of God, so it is one of the most material and standing evidences of the truth of our religion, that they should remain still as witnesses of the old testament; and as monuments of the destruction of Jerusalem, and the fierce wrath which
 God

GOD executed upon them for the crucifying of SERM.
CHRIST. CCXL.

Upon the whole matter, if so particular a prediction as this of our SAVIOUR's concerning the destruction of Jerusalem, so punctually answered by the event, be not an argument of divine inspiration, then there can be no evidence of any such thing as a spirit of prophesy. For what greater evidence of a true prophet, than to foretel so many things, so contingent and improbable, all which have accordingly afterward fallen out, just as they were foretold?

Suppose the Jews say true, that JESUS CHRIST was an impostor, and consequently justly put to death by them: what greater reflexion upon the providence of God can be imagined, than that this person should be permitted to foretel, that such and such calamities should befall those that had put him to death, as a punishment upon them for that sin; and afterwards all this should happen in so remarkable a manner, as the world cannot give the like instance? Is it in the least credible, that the divine providence should permit such things, as of necessity will give credit to an impostor, and would be good evidence to a prudent and considerate man, that he was divinely inspired?

I have now done with the fourth head of our SAVIOUR's predictions, namely, his prophesy of the destruction of Jerusalem, which I have been the longer upon, because it is so considerable an evidence of the truth of our religion, and so strong an argument against the Jews, that if they are not wrought upon by the consideration of the accomplishment of this prediction of our SAVIOUR's, and the great severity of God still continued toward that nation, it can be ascribed

ascribed to nothing but the just judgment of God, still “hiding the things of their peace from their eyes,” and giving them up to the same kind of fatal hardness and blindness, which sixteen hundred years ago was the cause of their destruction.

There remains yet one instance more of our SAVIOUR’s prophetic spirit, which I must reserve for another discourse.

S E R M O N CCXLI.

The evidences of the truth of the christian religion.

2 C O R. iv. 3, 4.

But if our gospel be hid, it is hid to them that are lost : in whom the GOD of this world hath blinded the minds of them which believe not, lest the light of the glorious gospel of CHRIST, who is the image of GOD, should shine unto them.

SERM.
CCXLI.

The
eighth
sermon on
this text.

I AM still upon the fourth evidence, which those who lived in our SAVIOUR’s time had of his divine authority, viz. the spirit of prophecy proved to be in him, and made good by the accomplishment of his predictions. Four instances I have already given, and now proceed to the

Fifth and last instance I shall give of our SAVIOUR’s prophetic spirit, viz. in those predictions which foretel the fate of the gospel in the world; what discouragements and difficulties the first publishers

ers of the gospel should meet with from the per-^{SERM.}
secution which the powers of the world should stir up ^{CCXLI.}
against them, and from the rising of false Christs
and false prophets ; what assistance they should find
in the carrying on the work ; and what success the
gospel should have, notwithstanding the opposition
that should be made against it. I shall speak briefly
to these.

I. What discouragements and difficulties the first
publishers of the gospel should meet with. Our SA-
VIOUR foretels two great discouragements.

1. From the persecutions which the powers of the
world should stir up against them. This our SA-
VIOUR gave his disciples early notice of, when he
first called them together, and sent them forth,
Matth. x. 16, 17, 18. " Behold, I send you forth
" as sheep in the midst of wolves. Be ye therefore
" wise as serpents, and harmless as doves. But be-
" ware of men ; for they will deliver you up to the
" councils, and they will scourge you in their syna-
" gogues. And ye shall be brought before gover-
" nors and kings for my sake." And, verse 21,
22. " And the brother shall deliver up the brother
" to death, and the father the child : and the chil-
" dren shall rise up against their parents, and cause
" them to be put to death. And ye shall be hated
" of all men for my name's sake." And that the
disciples might not be surpris'd with this, when it
should happen, as an unexpected thing, a little be-
fore his death, when he foretold the destruction of
Jerusalem, he repeats this prediction to them again,
as you may see, Matth. xxiv. 9. " Then they shall
" deliver you up to be afflicted, and shall kill you :
" and ye shall be hated of all nations for my
VOL. XII. D " name's

SERM. "name's sake." And Luke xxi. 12. "But before
 CCXLI. "all these they shall lay their hands on you, and per-
 "secute you, delivering you up to the synagogues,
 "and into prisons, being brought before kings and
 "rulers for my name's sake.

And all this we find punctually fulfilled in those persecutions that they met with at Jerusalem, and in other places wherever they went to preach the gospel, as you may read at large in the history of the acts of the apostles. And afterward in the persecutions raised against the christians by the Roman emperors, wherein all kinds of cruelties, and tortures were exercised upon them, and the christians killed by thousands in a day, as if they would have destroyed the very name of CHRIST out of the world, as every one knows that is acquainted with ecclesiastical history.

Particularly he foretold the two sons of Zebedee, James and John, that they should be put to death, Matth. xx. 23. saith he unto them, "ye shall drink
 "indeed of my cup, and be baptized with the bap-
 "tism that I am baptized with." And this accordingly happened to them, for we find Acts xii. 2. that James was slain by Herod. Indeed St. John lived a great while after, as our SAVIOUR foretold, John xxi. 22. "That John should tarry till he came;" that is, he should live till the destruction of Jerusalem, which is very frequently in the evangelists called CHRIST's coming; and so he did, and at last was put to death by the sword, as St. Chrysostom saith; tho' Justin, Irenæus, Clemens Alex. say nothing of it; and Origen and Tertullian say he died another death.

He

He likewise foretold Peter what kind of death he should die; namely, that when he was old he should be crucified, John xxi. 18, 19. "Verily, verily, I say unto thee, when thou wast young, thou girdedst thyself, and walkedst whither thou wouldest; but when thou shalt be old, thou shalt stretch forth thy hands, and another shall gird thee, and carry thee whither thou wouldest not." And the evangelist adds, "This spake he signifying by what death he should glorify God." And accordingly he was crucified about forty years after, as Eusebius tells us, and several of the fathers.

2. Another great discouragement which our SAVIOUR foretold they should meet with in the publishing of the gospel, was, from the rising of false Christs and false prophets. This our SAVIOUR foretels in the xxvith of St. Matth. verse 5, 24. that "many should come in his name, and should deceive many;" that there should "arise false Christs, and false prophets, and shew great signs and wonders; insomuch, that, if it were possible, they should deceive the very elect." And this I have already shewn was fulfilled in those many impostors, that rose up among the Jews, pretending themselves to be Messias's and drawing many people after them, both before and after the destruction of Jerusalem; and in Simon and the other heads of the Gnostic sect, who did great prejudice to christianity, by "turning the grace of God into wantonness," and abusing the holy doctrine of our SAVIOUR to all manner of licentiousness, and drawing of christians, not only to loose and filthy practices, but to a denial of the gospel for fear of

SERM. persecution, and at last to join with the heathens in
 CCXLI. the persecuting of the christians.

II. Our SAVIOUR likewise foretold what assistance the apostles should find in the carrying on their work. He promised that he would be with them in the preaching of the gospel, Matth. xxviii. 20. More particularly before his ascension, he told them that they should “ receive power by the coming of “ the HOLY GHOST upon them,” whereby they should be qualified to be “ witnesses unto him, in “ Judea and Jerusalem, and Samaria, and to the “ utmost parts of the earth,” Acts i. 8. And Matth. x. 19, 20. our SAVIOUR promiseth that his SPIRIT should direct them what to say, when they should be accused before kings and governors :” “ when they deliver you up, take no thought how, “ or what ye shall speak : for it shall be given you “ in that same hour what ye shall speak. For it “ is not you that speak ; but the SPIRIT of your “ FATHER which speaketh in you.” And again to the same purpose, he encourageth them a little before his death, Luke xxi. 14, 15. “ Settle it “ therefore in your hearts not to meditate before “ what ye shall answer. For I will give you a “ mouth and wisdom, which all your adversaries “ shall not be able to gainsay nor resist.”

And all this we find was made good to them after our SAVIOUR’s ascension. They were wonderfully assisted, and carried on above themselves in the preaching of the gospel. So the evangelist St. Mark tells us, Mark xvi. 20. that the apostles “ went “ forth, and preached every where, the LORD “ working with them, and confirming the word “ with

“ with signs following.” And all along in the SERM.
history of the Acts, we find that they were extraor- CCXLI.
dinarily strengthened and assisted in the publishing of
the gospel. And particularly our SAVIOUR’s pre-
diction and promise was made good to St. Stephen,
of whom it is said, Acts vi. 10. that when he was
disputing with the Jews, “ they were not able to
“ resist the wisdom and the spirit by which he
“ spake.”

III. Our SAVIOUR foretold also what success the
gospel should have, notwithstanding all the oppo-
sition that should be made against it; that it should
be “ published in all nations,” Matth. xxiv. 14. and
in despite of all the malice of the Jews, and the
potent opposition that the Gentiles should make
against the publishers of the gospel, they should
“ make disciples in every nation, and bear witness
“ unto CHRIST to the uttermost parts of the earth,”
Matth. xxviii. 19. and Acts i. 8. that he would
“ build his church upon a rock, and the gates of hell
“ should not prevail against it,” Matth. xvi. 18.
And this we find was done with great success, both
among the Jews and Gentiles, as appears out of the
history of the Acts of the apostles, and other histories
of the first ages of the church.

Particularly our SAVIOUR foretold that that act of
kindness which Mary shewed to him, in anointing his
head with precious ointment, should be remembered
where-ever the gospel was preached, Matth. xxvi.
12. “ Verily I say unto you, wheresoever this gos-
“ pel shall be preached in the whole world, there
“ shall also this that this woman hath done, be told
“ for a memorial of her.” And accordingly this
little particular history hath every where been pro-

SERM. pagated with the gospel, and the fame of it hath spread
 CCXLI. as far, as the notice of christianity.

And thus I have done with the fourth and last evidence of our SAVIOUR's divine authority, namely, the prophetic spirit, which was proved to be in him, and made good by the punctual accomplishment of his predictions. I shall only shew that these instances which I have given, are clear arguments of a prophetic spirit in our SAVIOUR. And this will appear, if we consider these two things :

First, that all these things which our SAVIOUR foretold, were purely contingent in respect of us ; that is, there was no necessity that they should come to pass ; and consequently nothing but infinite knowledge could certainly foresee that they would.

Secondly, all or most of them, were not only contingent, but exceeding unlikely, there was no probability that they should happen ; and consequently, no one could reasonably and prudently have foreseen that they would. And these two things being made out will abundantly evidence, that the foretelling of these things doth argue a prophetic spirit in our SAVIOUR ; and consequently his divine authority. Things that have necessary causes, if those causes be evident, any one may foretel that they will be : things that are probable, and likely to happen, every prudent man may reasonably conjecture that they will be, and consequently may in many cases successfully foretel them without a spirit of prophecy : but such things as in respect of us are purely contingent, and depend upon no necessary causes we know of, especially if they be withal unlikely to come to pass, no man can foretel but by the inspiration of that Spirit, whose infinite wisdom knows all things ; and
 this

this is the true reason why the foretelling of future contingents hath always been looked upon as an argument of inspiration. SERM.
CCXLI.

First, these things which our SAVIOUR foretold, were purely contingent ; that is, there was no necessity in human reason that they should come to pass, and consequently no man without inspiration could certainly foretel them. Those things are said to be contingent in respect of us, which have no necessary cause that we know of ; particularly those things which depend upon the will of free agents, either the will of men, or of GOD. And such were those things which our SAVIOUR foretold ; many of them depended upon the will of men, whether they should happen or not, supposing the permissive will of GOD ; that is, that GOD had determined not to interpose and hinder them.

The death of CHRIST, with all the wicked and opprobrious circumstances of it, depended upon the will of men ; and therefore it was a thing that no man could foresee whether it would be or not. So likewise the resistance and opposition that was made to the gospel by the persecutions of men, and the malice of false prophets, did depend upon the wills of men.

But many of these events depended purely upon the will of GOD, which no man could foreknow, unless he did reveal it to him ; and if he did, this was an argument of inspiration, which is the thing we are contending for. Of this kind were the resurrection of our SAVIOUR from the dead ; his being taken up into heaven ; the miraculous powers and gifts wherewith the apostles and primitive christians were endowed ; the fatal destruction of Jerusalem

SERM. and the Jewish nation, contrary to the design of those
 CCXLI. who brought it to pass; the prevalency of the gospel
 in the world, in despite of all opposition made against
 it. All these were brought to pass in a more immediate
 manner, by the power of GOD, and therefore depended
 purely upon his will.

Secondly, most of the things which our SAVIOUR foretold, were not only purely contingent in respect of us, and therefore could not without inspiration be certainly foreseen; but were also exceedingly unlikely, and improbable in themselves, and therefore could not so much as prudently have been conjectured. And to make this out more fully, I shall run over the several instances of our SAVIOUR's predictions, and shew how unlikely the things which he foretold, were to have come to pass: and if this appear, it must be granted that our SAVIOUR was a prophet.

I. Our SAVIOUR's prediction concerning his own death and sufferings was a thing very unlikely to have come to pass. It was very likely that the pharisees and chief priests, whose interest was so much struck at, should have malice enough against him, to design his ruin; but that ever they should have accomplished it without a popular tumult and sedition, was very unlikely, considering the esteem and favour he had among the people. Who could have believed that the Jews, who had seen so many of his miracles, and received so great benefits by them, who were such admirers of his doctrine, and so astonish'd at it, who "would have made him king," should ever have consented to have put him to death? who could have thought that so soon after they had so unanimously brought him to Jerusalem in triumph
 with

with such hofannas and acclamations, the same people should have been so eager to have him crucified? I know there is nothing more inconstant, than the giddy and fickle multitude; nothing less to be relied upon, than the opinion and applause of the people: but because the humour of the people is so uncertain, therefore for this reason it was hard to prophesy what they would do. And nothing was more improbable, than that any should certainly foretel where this humour would at last fix and settle. Nay, it was very unlikely that they who had been raised to so great and just an esteem of him, from a clear conviction of his innocency and holiness, and of the divine power which attended him, should have had either the wickedness, or the confidence to have gone about to compass the death of so innocent and divine a person.

And it is very remarkable, that this was a thing so incredible to the disciples, that though our SAVIOUR did several times, in the plainest words that could be, tell them of his death and sufferings, yet they could not understand it; that is, it could by no means sink into them, they could not apprehend that ever any such thing should come to pass, Mark ix. 31, 32. "For he taught his disciples, and said unto them, the son of man is delivered into the hands of men, and they shall kill him, and after that he is killed, he shall rise the third day. But they understood not that saying, and were afraid to ask him." And Luke ix. 43, 44, 45. after our SAVIOUR had done a great miracle, 'tis said, "they were all amazed at the mighty power of God: but while they wondered every one at all things which Jesus did, he said unto his disciples, let these

SERM.
CCXLI.

SERM. " these sayings sink down into your ears : for the
 CCXLI. " son of man shall be delivered into the hands of
 " men. But they understood not this saying, and it
 " was hid from them, that they perceived it not ;
 " and they feared to ask him of that saying." They
 looked upon it as a thing incredible, that he who
 did such works, and was attended with such a divine
 power, should ever be " delivered into the hands of
 " men ;" if men should be so malicious as to design
 his death, yet it was not credible that God should
 give up such a person into their hands. And again,
 a little before his sufferings, he inculcates this more
 particularly upon them, Luke xviii. 31, 32, 33, 34.
 " Then he took unto him the twelve, and said unto
 " them, behold we go up to Jerusalem, and all
 " things that are written by the prophets concerning
 " the son of man shall be accomplished. For he
 " shall be delivered unto the Gentiles, and shall be
 " mocked, and spitefully entreated, and spit upon ;
 " and they shall scourge him, and put him to
 " death ;" and then it is said of the disciples, that
 " they understood none of these things, and this
 " saying was hid from them, neither knew they the
 " things which were spoken." What was the mat-
 ter ? could any thing have been said in plainer
 words, than our SAVIOUR's declaring this to them ?
 no certainly, they understood very well the mean-
 ing of those words ; for it is said, Matth. xvii. 23.
 that " when he said this to them, they were exceed-
 " ing sorry," they were very much troubled to hear
 him say this ; they understood very well what the
 words signified, and they were troubled at the first
 appearance and literal sense of them : but it seems
 they took them to be a parable, and to have some alle-

allegorical meaning hidden under them; for they could not imagine, that ever they should be literally true. And that this was their apprehension, seems to be sufficiently intimated by both the evangelists, St. Mark and St. Luke, who after they had told us, that "the disciples understood not this saying," they immediately add, that "they feared to ask CHRIST of this saying;" that is, they did not understand whether they were to take this saying in the literal and obvious sense of it; or to look upon it as an allegory, or a parable that had some hidden sense; but being troubled at the saying, because the obvious and literal sense had a great deal of horror, they were afraid to ask our SAVIOUR the meaning of it (as they used always to ask him the meaning of his parables) for fear he should tell them, that he intended it literally. Now from this it appears, how unlikely it seemed to the disciples, that our SAVIOUR should suffer such things as he foretold of himself.

2. Our SAVIOUR's predictions concerning his rising again out of the grave the third day; concerning his being taken up into heaven; concerning the descent of the HOLY GHOST upon the apostles, in such miraculous powers and gifts after his ascension, were all things very unlikely and incredible, because so exceeding strange, and above the common course of nature. We look upon it as a wonderful thing, for a man certainly to foretel an ordinary thing: but if any man should tell us, that after he was dead, and had lain three days in the grave, he should rise again, and be visibly taken up into heaven, and from thence bestow miraculous gifts upon men, and this should accordingly come to pass;

SERM.
CCXLI.

SERM. pass; it were impossible not to think this man a
 CCXLI. prophet.

3. Our SAVIOUR's prediction concerning the fatal destruction of Jerusalem, and the Jewish nation, was very unlikely. But this I spake to at large, when I explained the prophesy.

4. The fate which our SAVIOUR foretold the gospel should have in the world, was a thing very improbable, that it should meet with great opposition and persecution, was not strange; nothing being more likely than that a religion which was new to the world, so contrary to the principles of those who had been educated in another religion, and so opposite to the interests of men, should be opposed and resisted to the utmost: but then there are these three things very strange, which our SAVIOUR foretold should attend the publication of the gospel.

(1.) That an action of no greater consideration than that was, of Mary's anointing of our LORD's head, and done privately, should be celebrated through the world in all ages; and the memory of it should be as far, and as long propagated, as the most famous actions of the greatest prince that ever was in the world.

(2.) This was strange and unlikely, which our SAVIOUR likewise foretold, that false CHRISTs, and false prophets and teachers should arise after his death; that after the Jews had been so severe to our SAVIOUR, for giving out himself to be the MESSIAS, though he gave such convincing evidence of it, this should not deter counterfeits from assuming so dangerous a person; and that when christianity was persecuted, there should arise false apostles, and false teachers, that should pretend to christianity,
 when

when it was so odious a profession; that any should be found that should dissemble in a matter so full of hazard and danger; this was very strange and unlikely. SERM.
CCXLI.

But because this prediction of our SAVIOUR's concerning false Christs, and false prophets, is aspersed by the atheists, and particularly by Vaninus, as one of the most cunning and crafty actions that our SAVIOUR did; as if after he had let himself into a reputation and esteem in the world, he had designed by this prediction to bolt the door against all others; therefore it will be requisite that I speak a little more particularly to this.

1. It is acknowledged by the atheists themselves, particularly by Vaninus, that it does not appear that our SAVIOUR carried on any worldly design. Why then should he be suspected of it in this matter, which is capable of a good interpretation; when his whole life, and all the actions of it, do clear him of any such suspicion? but because it is said, that though he carried on no design for riches and power, yet he had a deep design to gain reputation and fame to himself in after ages; therefore I shall add one or two considerations more, to shew how unreasonable, and how perfectly malicious this jealousy is.

2. Let us consider then, that this prediction of his would either be accomplished or not: but whether it was, or was not, it can be no argument of any design of vain-glory. If it had not came to pass (as I have shewn it was very unlikely it should, especially within the compass of the time which he had prefixed for it) then he had been a false prophet, and so he had lost his reputation, by the very means where-
by

SERM. by he intended to have established it, which I do
 CCXLI. not understand the craft and cunning of: for either
 he knew certainly that it would come to pass, or not; if he did he was a true prophet; if he did not, he did not do politicly, in putting his reputation upon such a hazard.

3. If we suppose him, as this objection does, to have been an impostor, and consequently not to have believed his own doctrine of the immortality of the soul, and another life after this; what an apparent madness had it been to neglect the present advantages of this world, which he was capable of enjoying; and to lay out for a fame and reputation, after he was dead and extinguished, and consequently when he should not be capable of having any sense and enjoyment of it!

And the instance of the Romans, who ventured their lives out of vain-glory, to get a name after they were dead, will avail nothing in this case; because it plainly appears from all the heathen writers, that they did this upon a presumption of their immortality, and a persuasion that they should live in another world, and enjoy the pleasure of the fame by which their names should be celebrated in this world: but had they not been persuaded of this, it would have been the greatest folly in the world, to have ventured their lives to gain a fame after death, and to be spoken of with honour when they were not, and consequently could take no pleasure in it. This may suffice to be said in short, to this malicious and absurd objection. But,

(3.) This is strange and unlikely, that the gospel should have such success in the world. And the more likely it was, that it should meet with so much oppo-

opposition and resistance, the more unlikely was it SERM.
that it should prevail, especially by such means, and CCXLI.
in such manner as it did; that a few unlearned men,
destitute of secular arts and learning, opposed by
all the wit and power that the world could exert,
should be able in the space of a few years to propa-
gate and plant all over the known world a doctrine
so despised and persecuted, so contrary to the almost
invincible prejudice of education in another reli-
gion, so opposite to those two great governors of
the world, the lusts and the interests of men; no-
thing could have been foretold so unlikely and im-
probable as this is; especially if we take in this, that
the chief instrument of spreading this doctrine in
the world, was the fiercest opposer and persecutor
of it, I mean St. Paul, who by a light and voice
from heaven, was taken off from persecuting chri-
stianity, and became the most active and zealous in-
strument of its propagation. The wonderful success
and prevalency of the gospel by such means, and in
such circumstances of difficulty, and potent oppo-
sition made against it, are a plain indication, that this
doctrine was assisted and countenanced from heaven;
that "it was of God," and therefore "could not
be overthrown." Nothing but the mighty force
of truth could, naked and unarmed, have done such
wonders in the world.

And thus I have, I hope, fully shewn that those
who lived in the age of our SAVIOUR, were capable
of having sufficient assurance, that JESUS CHRIST,
who declared the christian religion to the world, was
sent of God. From the prophecies concerning him;
the testimonies that were given him by an immediate
voice from heaven; the miracles that were wrought

by him, and on his behalf; and by the prophetic spirit that gave evidence of his inspiration. And if any one doubt whether he gave these testimonies of his divine authority to the world, let him consider that it is almost as great a miracle as any of those, that a doctrine preached by one that gave no testimony of his divine authority to the world, should be so strangely propagated, and maintain its possession so long in the world; I say, let him consider this, and methinks this should convince him of the truth of christianity.

S E R M O N CCXLII.

The evidences of the truth of the christian religion.

2 C O R. iv. 3, 4.

But if our gospel be hid, it is hid to them that are lost: in whom the GOD of this world hath blinded the minds of them which believe not, lest the light of the glorious gospel of CHRIST, who is the image of GOD, should shine unto them.

SERM. CCXLII. **I**N discoursing of the evidence of our SAVIOUR'S divine authority, I proposed the considering three things.

The ninth
sermon on
this text.

First what evidence they had, who heard the doctrine of the gospel immediately from our SAVIOUR.

Secondly,

Secondly, what evidence they had who received this doctrine by the preaching of the apostles. SERM.
CCXLII.

Thirdly, what evidence after-ages have, until the present time.

The first of these I have handled at large ; and now proceed to the

Second, viz. to consider what assurance those who heard the doctrine of CHRIST from the apostles were capable of having concerning his divine authority : and of this I shall give you an account in these three particulars.

First, they had all the assurance concerning this matter, which men can have of any thing from the testimony of credible eye and ear-witnesses.

Secondly, they had this testimony confirmed by miracles.

Thirdly, they had yet a farther evidence of the divinity of this doctrine, from the wonderful prevalence and success of it, by such improbable and unlikely means.

First, those who received the doctrine of CHRIST from the apostles, had all the assurance of CHRIST's divine authority, that men can have of any thing from the testimony of credible eye and ear-witnesses. The apostles who immediately conversed with our SAVIOUR, and heard his doctrine, and saw his miracles, they had the testimony of their own senses for his divine authority ; they heard and saw the attestations which GOD gave to him ; and those to whom the apostles preached, received all this from them, as from eye and ear-witnesses. So that those who received the doctrines of CHRIST from the apostles had all the arguments which the apostles had, to satisfy them concerning CHRIST's divine

SERM. authority, only they were not conveyed to them in so
CCXLII. immediate a manner. The apostles saw and heard
those things themselves, which gave them satisfaction
that JESUS CHRIST came from GOD: those to whom
the apostles preached, received these things from their
testimony.

And this also was a sufficient ground of assurance,
as will clearly appear, if we can make out these two
things :

I. That the apostles were credible witnesses. And,

II. That if they were so, then their testimony was
sufficient to persuade belief.

I. That the apostles were credible witnesses. Of
their knowledge there can be no question, because
they gave testimony only of what themselves had
seen and heard: so that if they falsified in any thing,
it could not be for want of sufficient knowledge, but
for want of fidelity. Now those who heard them,
had all the arguments that could be to satisfy them
of their fidelity. They delivered things plainly, and
without artificial insinuations; they all agreed in
their testimony, and were always constant to them-
selves in the same relation; there was no visible in-
terest to sway them in the least to falsify against
their knowledge; they gained nothing by it; nay,
so far were they from that, that they ran them-
selves hereby upon the greatest hazards and disad-
vantages; and, which is the highest evidence that
this world can give of any man's sincerity, they ven-
tured their lives for this testimony, and sealed it
with their blood. For though martyrdom be no
sufficient argument of the truth of that for which a
man lays down his life, yet it is a very good argu-
ment of a man's sincerity; it signifies that a man

is in earnest, and believes himself; and if the thing
be not true, yet that he thinks it to be so, otherwise
he would not have died for it: so that if we have
no reason to doubt of the knowledge of those wit-
nesses (as certainly we have no reason, the things
which they testified being plain matters, what they
saw and heard, in which every man knows whether
he speaks true or not; I say, if we have no rea-
son to doubt of their knowledge) we cannot ques-
tion their integrity and sincerity, having the highest
evidence of that, which this world can afford: for
there cannot be a better argument of the integrity
of witnesses, than to lay down their lives for their
testimony.

II. If the apostles were credible witnesses, then
was their testimony sufficient to persuade belief. For
what greater evidence can any man have of any
thing which himself has not seen, than to re-
ceive it from credible eye-witnesses, that is, from
such persons as we have all the reason in the world
to judge worthy of credit? This evidence men are
contented to accept in other cases, as sufficient to
induce belief; and if we will not accept it in mat-
ters of religion, we are very partial and unjust.
We find that upon the evidence of credible wit-
nesses men generally proceed with good assurance
in humane affairs: the chief temporal interests of
men, of their estates, and reputation, and lives are
determined upon no better evidence than this. Now
if in matters of religion we will reject the evidence
which shall be sufficient to sway our assent in other
things, it is a plain sign that we have less mind to
religion, than to other things, that we have some
interest or pique against it; otherwise we would not

SERM. refuse to yield an equal assent, where the evidence is
CCXLII. equal.

This reason tells us ; and our SAVIOUR in effect says the same thing, when he chargeth those who rejected this evidence of credible witnesses with the sin of unbelief : Mark xvi. 14. “ Afterward he appeared unto the eleven, as they sat at meat, and “ upbraided them with their unbelief and hardness “ of heart, because they believed not them which “ had seen him after he was risen.” But now if the testimony of credible witnesses be not a sufficient ground of faith, it could have been no sin in the disciples, not to believe those who had seen CHRIST risen from the dead.

Secondly, those who received the doctrine of CHRIST from the apostles, had not only the testimony of credible witnesses, but they had this testimony confirmed by miracles. Because the apostles were to go abroad into the world, and to preach to many who never saw nor knew them before, and consequently had no reason at first to believe their testimony, till they were satisfied of the value of the witnesses, and this would require long time, and frequent conversation, so that the gospel must have made but a very slow progress at this rate : and because they were like to meet with great opposition from the powers and wits of the world, from the prejudices of education, and from the lusts and interests of men ; therefore for the speedier and more effectual propagation of the gospel, God was pleased to confirm this testimony by miracles, to endue those who were to preach the gospel to the world, with miraculous powers and gifts, of speaking all languages, and healing diseases, and casting out devils, of fore-
telling

telling things to come, and raising the dead, that being accompanied with these visible and sensible signs of the divine presence and power, their testimony might more easily be believed. SERM.
CCXLII.

And that this was the end of those miraculous gifts of the HOLY GHOST, the scripture frequently tells us. Hence it is that our SAVIOUR forbade them to preach the gospel abroad, till they were furnished with this power, Luke xxiv. 49. “ But tarry ye in the city of Jerusalem, until ye be endued with power from on high.” And Acts i. 8, 9. our SAVIOUR tells the apostles before his ascension. “ But ye shall receive power after that the HOLY GHOST is come upon you, and ye shall be witnesses unto me in Jerusalem, and in all Judea, and in Samaria, and to the utmost parts of the earth.” This was that which qualified them to be witnesses to CHRIST, and which gave confirmation to their testimony. So St. Mark tells us, Mark xvi. 20. “ And they went forth and preached every where, the LORD working with them, and confirming the word with signs following.” To the same purpose the apostle to the Hebrews, chap. ii. 3, 4. speaking of the publishing of the gospel, “ how shall we escape, says he, if we neglect so great salvation, which at the first began to be spoken by the LORD, and was confirmed unto us by them that heard him?” What was the confirmation that was given to it? It follows in the next words, “ God also bearing them witness, both with signs and wonders, and with divers miracles, and gifts of the HOLY GHOST.” The apostles bare witness of CHRIST, and God bare

SERM. witness to them, by those miraculous powers and
CCXLII. gifts, that their testimony was true.

Thirdly, those who received the doctrine of CHRIST from the apostles had yet a farther evidence of the divinity of this doctrine, from the wonderful success and prevalency of it by such improbable and unlikely means. Had the doctrine of CHRIST's religion been suited to the corruptions of men, and stolen insensibly into the world, and prevailed by degrees in the revolution of many ages, as the heathen superstition and idolatry did, which met with no opposition from the lusts and interests of men, it then had been no strange thing: or had it been planted by power and force of arms, as the religion of Mahomet was, then indeed the success of it had been no argument that it was from God. Had it been set off with all imaginable advantages of wit and eloquence, as the philosophy of the heathens was; and had it been entertained by a few more sublime spirits, and those who were more studious and contemplative, and whose understandings were elevated above the common pitch, this might have been looked upon but as humane and ordinary, and according to the common and usual course of things. But that a doctrine which was so opposite to the lusts and inclinations of men, which was persecuted and opposed by all the powers of the world, despised and condemned by the witty part of mankind; that a doctrine, the profession whereof did expose men to so many worldly inconveniencies, to so many dangers and sufferings, to derision and to death, should be planted by a few mean and inconsiderable men, destitute of all secular power, and
advan-

advantages of humane learning and eloquence ; and SERM.
in so short a time be so vastly propagated, and so CCXLII.
generally entertained by all sorts of men, rich and
poor, philosophers and illiterate ; this was extraordi-
nary, and can be attributed to nothing else but a
divine power accompanying it, and bearing it up
against the power and malice of men. That the
doctrine of the gospel delivered to the world by mean
persons, with so much simplicity and plainness, should
so strangely affect the hearts of men, and be of so
admirable a force to stir up and inflame men to piety
and virtue, seems to me a very plain argument of
its divinity : for we do not find that any doctrine that
was merely humane, had ever any considerable power
upon the minds of men, where it was not set off
with the arts of speech, and charms of eloquence :
and then it only produceth some present motions and
heats ; but seldom hath any lasting and permanent
effect, such as the christian religion hath had in the
world.

Thus I have shewn what assurance those who re-
ceived the doctrine of the gospel from the apostles,
were capable of having concerning the divinity of
this doctrine, and the divine authority of the per-
sons who delivered it to the world.

Thirdly, I am to consider what assurance after-
ages, down to this day, are capable of having con-
cerning this matter ; and this principally concerns us,
who live at the distance of so many ages from the
first revelation of the gospel. Of this I shall give
you an account in these two particulars :

First, we have an authentic and credible account
of this doctrine, and of the confirmation which was
in the first ages given to it, transmitted down to us.

E 4

Secondly,

SERM. Secondly, the effects of this doctrine still remain in
CCXLII. the world.

First, we have a credible and authentic account of this doctrine, and of the confirmation which in the first ages was given to it, transmitted down to us. I told you at first, that there are but these three ways whereby we can be assured of matters of fact.

1. By the immediate testimony of our own senses, if we ourselves be present when the thing is done or spoken, and see and hear it. Or,

2. By the testimony of credible eye or ear-witnesses of it. Or,

3. By a credible account or relation of it transmitted to us. And all these ways in their kind, are accounted sufficient to give men an undoubted assurance of matter of fact. No man doubts of what he himself sees or hears: men generally believe many things which they have not opportunity of seeing themselves, if they be attested to them by credible eye-witnesses; and for things that were done long ago, and which no man now alive was a witness of, men are abundantly satisfied by a credible relation transmitted down to them. Upon this account men do firmly believe, that Alexander about two thousand years ago conquered a great part of the world; and that there was such a person as Julius Cæsar, who seventeen hundred years ago conquered England; and the like. Now if we have the doctrine and history of the gospel, and all the evidences of our SAVIOUR's divine authority, conveyed down to us, in as credible a manner, as any of these ancient matters of fact are, which mankind do most firmly believe, then we have sufficient ground to be assured of it.

Now

Now there are but two ways imaginable, where-
by the doctrine of CHRIST's religion, and the evi-
dences of its divinity, can be conveyed down to us ;
either by oral report and tradition, or by books
and writing. The former of these the experience
of the world hath shewn to be very uncertain, and in
the succession of many ages liable to great changes
and hazards. Hence it is that the prudence of man-
kind, and the necessity of human affairs, have in-
troduced the latter way of conveying the memory of
things, to after-ages, namely, by writing and re-
cords : and the good God likewise in his wise provi-
dence hath taken care, that those who were eye and
ear-witnesses of our SAVIOUR's doctrine and life,
should commit to writing the history and relation of
those matters, that so the memory of them might be
preserved to all generations ; and these books which
we call the holy scriptures, are the authentic records
of our religion, without which the christian religion in
probability had long since either been strangely cor-
rupted, or wholly lost out of the world. For that
oral report would not have preserved it, there is this
evidence, sufficient to convince any man that is not
obstinately resolved to the contrary, that of all the
persons that formerly lived in the world, and the
great actions that have been done, besides what are
recorded in history, and of the innumerable mira-
cles of our SAVIOUR, which were not written in the
books of the gospel : I say, of all these, oral tradi-
tion hath preserved nothing ; so that if the doctrine
of the christian religion, and the history of the life
and actions of our SAVIOUR and the apostles, had
not been put into a surer way of conveyance than
that of oral tradition, in all probability before this
time

SERM.
CCXLII.

SERM. time there would have been left no certain monu-
CCXLII. ments of them in the world.

And that we may understand how much these latter ages are indebted to the wisdom and goodness of God, that he hath furnished us with so fixt and certain a way of being acquainted with his will, with the doctrine and grounds of our religion, I might represent to you what advantages this standing revelation of the scripture hath above that way of oral tradition; yea, though the revelation of the gospel had been renewed every two or three ages. But this has been done in some former discourses*. I therefore proceed to the other ground of assurance which the ages after the apostles are capable of having, viz.

Secondly, the effect of this doctrine still remains in the world. Christian religion is still professed in several nations, and is entertained by a considerable part of the world: and allowing for the difference between the extraordinary assistance which at first accompanied the gospel, and was necessary for the planting of it, and the more humane and ordinary ways whereby it is now propagated, it hath considerable effects upon the hearts and lives of men.

It might justly indeed be expected, considering the reasonableness of the christian religion, and the great evidence we have of the truth and divinity of it, that it should have a greater force and power upon men, than it hath in most parts of christendom; but we cannot reasonably expect in a prosperous state of christianity, those extraordinary heats and fervours which the primitive christians had whilst they were under continual persecution: we cannot reasonably expect that unity among christians, and that they should

* See Serm. cxxvii, and cxxviii.

should be so generally and universally good, as they were under a state of persecution; for common sufferings have a strange force to unite men, and to endear them to one another: in times of persecution it might be expected that all or most of those who professed themselves christians, should be really so: when a profession is dangerous to those that make it, and attended with persecutions, then there will be but few pretenders to it; scarce any men will dissemble to the hazard of this life: but when any religion flourisheth, and is prosperous, when it is an odious thing, and against a man's interest not to profess it, then it may justly be feared that there will be great numbers of hypocrites, of those who in compliance with the fashion, and the prevailing interest, will take upon them the outward profession of it.

But however we see the same effects of christianity still remain in the world: CHRIST is still owned as the true MESSIAS and the SON of GOD; his doctrine acknowledged to be true, and to have been from GOD; so that thus far his promise hath been made good of "building his church upon a rock," and that "the gates of hell should not prevail against it." That christianity hath uninterruptedly continued for above sixteen hundred years, is an additional evidence of the divinity of this doctrine, which the first ages of the world could not have: only this is sadly to be bewailed, that this religion, which hath all imaginable confirmation given to the truth of it, should have no greater effect upon the lives of men; that when we have so much reason to assent to it, yet so few can be persuaded to practise it; that when we make so many solemn professions of our belief of
the

SERM.
CCXLII.

SERM. the truth of it, yet by the actions of our lives
 CCXLII. we should so visibly contradict the articles of our
 belief.

Thus I have gone through the first thing I proposed to be considered in my text, viz. the full and clear evidence which we have of the truth of the gospel, and particularly of the divine authority of that person, who declared the christian religion to the world. There are two other general heads which the text would lead us to consider, which I shall but briefly treat of, and so conclude this subject.

The second thing considerable in the words is, the cause of the infidelity of men, notwithstanding all the evidence which the gospel carries along with it; which the apostle expresseth in these words, “ but if our gospel be hid, it is hid to them that are lost; in whom the God of this world hath blinded the minds of them which believe not, lest the light of the glorious gospel of CHRIST, who is the image of God, should shine unto them.”

In speaking to this, I shall do these four things :

First, shew why the infidelity of men is attributed to the devil, as the cause of it.

Secondly, shew more particularly what influence the devil hath upon the minds of men to keep them in unbelief.

Thirdly, that this does not excuse the infidelity of men.

Fourthly, shew the wickedness and unreasonableness of infidelity.

First, why the infidelity of men is attributed to the devil, as the cause of it. There are two principles that bear sway in the world, and have a more

immediate influence upon the mind of man; the SERM. HOLY SPIRIT of GOD, and the devil. The for-CCXLII.
mer of these is continually moving and inclining them to good: the latter swaying and tempting them to evil; and these two principles share mankind between them. Hence it is that in scripture, the SPIRIT of GOD is said to dwell in good men; and the wicked and vicious part of mankind (whom the scripture frequently calls the world) are said to be in the possession of the devil, and to belong to his share and lot. Upon this account the devil is called in the text, "the GOD of this world." Accordingly St. John frequently rangeth mankind under these two heads; those that belong to GOD, and those that belong to the devil, 1 John iii. 9. "He that committeth sin is of the devil; but he that committeth not sin, is born of GOD." In the next verse he calleth them "the children of GOD, and the children of the devil: in this the children of GOD are manifest, and the children of the devil." So likewise chap. v. 19. "And we know that we are of GOD, and the whole world lieth in wickedness." Or as the words may be rendered more suitably to the opposition which the apostle aims at, "the whole world is subject to the wicked one;" "we are of GOD," but the rest of the world is "subject to the devil."

Upon this account it is, that in the constant phrase of scripture, all good motions and inclinations, and all good graces, and virtues are ascribed to the SPIRIT of GOD, as the author and worker of them; and all wicked and vicious inclinations, all the sins and vices of men are attributed to the devil, as in some sort the author and worker of them: and
because

SERM. because faith is the root of all other graces and
CCXLII. virtues, as infidelity is of sin and wickedness, there-
 fore faith is in a peculiar manner said to be the work
 of the HOLY GHOST, and infidelity the work of the
 devil. And as the SPIRIT of GOD is said “to en-
 lighten the understandings of men, and to open
 their hearts that they may believe:” so the de-
 vil is said “to blind the minds of them that be-
 lieve not.” As the SPIRIT of GOD is said “to
 work in them that believe:” so the devil is said
 “to work in the children of unbelief:” Eph. ii. 2.
 He is called “the spirit that worketh in the chil-
 dren of disobedience, ἀπειθείας, of unbelief.” This
 is one of the principal designs which the devil hath
 always carried on in the world, to bring men to
 unbelief, and to keep them in it. As it is the great
 work of the SPIRIT of truth “to lead men into
 truth,” and bring them to the belief of it: so
 the great business of the devil is to seduce men from
 the truth. Upon this account he is said, John viii.
 44. to be “a murderer from the beginning, be-
 cause he abode not in the truth;” which refers
 to the first temptation, whereby he ruined and de-
 stroyed our first parents, by seducing them to un-
 belief; “hath God said, ye shall not eat of every
 tree of the garden?” And because he found this
 attempt so successful, he still pursues mankind with
 the same temptation of unbelief. This for the first;
 why infidelity is attributed to the devil, as the cause
 of it.

I come in the second place to shew more parti-
 cularly what influence the devil hath upon the
 minds of men, to keep them in unbelief; how and
 in what manner “he blinds the minds of them that
 believe

“believe not.” These two ways chiefly; by false principles; and by vicious and corrupt habits.

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I. By false principles, which when they have once got possession of the understanding, like so many enemies they defend it, and hold out against the truth. By this means the devil kept a great part of the Jews, and of the heathen world in unbelief; and their minds were so blinded by these false principles which they had entertained, that they could not see “the light of the glorious gospel of CHRIST.” As for the Jews, he had with a great deal of art conveyed false principles into them, whereby they were extremely prejudiced against CHRIST and his doctrine, so that when he, who was “the desire of all nations,” and whom the Jews had looked for with so longing an expectation, was come, they could “see no beauty in him, wherefore he should be despised.” The devil no doubt understood very well by the prophecies of the old testament, that the MESSIAS was to come, who would give a terrible blow to his kingdom, and therefore to provide against this storm which he saw coming upon him, he possessed the Jews a great while before with false apprehensions of the MESSIAS, that he was to be a great temporal prince, and to deliver Israel from all their enemies, and to subdue all nations to them; and he played his game so well, that the most learned among the Jews were generally possessed with this apprehension, under the notion of a divine doctrine, which had been brought down to them by tradition from Moses and the prophets: so that when the MESSIAS came, and they saw nothing of the outward glory and splendor which they expected, they would

SERM. would not know him; but despised and rejected him,
 CCXLII. as a counterfeit and impostor.

As for the idolatrous Gentiles, he had for many ages together blinded them with false notions of GOD and his worship, and with principles of a false philosophy, by which when they came to measure the doctrine of CHRIST, the plain truths of the christian religion seemed foolish and ridiculous to them; and by these prejudices the devil kept many of them, especially of the philosophers, from believing the gospel.

And proportionably in every age, suitably to the temper of it, he endeavours to possess men with false principles, either to keep them in unbelief, or to drive them to it.

II. The second way whereby the devil “ blinds “ the minds of them that believe not,” is by vicious and corrupt habits; which though they do not possess the understanding, yet they have a bad influence upon it; as fumes and vapours from the lower parts of the body affect the head. The vices and lusts of men darken the understanding, and fill the mind with gross and sensual apprehensions of things, and render men unfit to discern those truths that are of a spiritual nature and tendency, and indisposed to receive them. When mens “ deeds are evil, they “ do not love the light,” lest it should reprove their vices, and make them manifest. Truth is offensive and grievous to a corrupt mind, as the light of the sun is to sore eyes. A vicious man is not free to entertain those truths which would check and cross him in his way; he looks upon them as enemies, and therefore thinks himself concerned to oppose

oppose them. Every lust makes a man partial in his judgment, and lays a false bias upon his understanding, which carries it off from truth, and makes it lean towards that side of the question which is most agreeable to the interest of his lusts. S E R M.
CCXLII.

And by this means the devil kept many, both of the Jews and Gentiles, in unbelief; he had tempted them to those sins which did indispose them for the receiving of that doctrine which enjoins “the denying of ungodliness, and worldly lusts,” and chargeth men so strictly with all manner of holiness and purity. The pharisees under a mask of religion were guilty of great wickedness and impiety; and the heathens were monstrously degenerated into all manner of vice. So that it was not only the false principles, but likewise the vicious lives of men, which were opposite to the doctrine of the gospel, “and blinded their minds, that the light of the glorious gospel of CHRIST did not shine into them.”

And the devil still makes use of this means to bring men to infidelity, and keep them in it; as knowing that the shortest way to atheism and infidelity, is to debauch them in their lives. Therefore the apostle seems to give this as the reason of the infidelity of some in his time, 2 Thess. ii. 12. “That they all may be damned, who believed not the truth, but had pleasure in unrighteousness.” When men once take pleasure in wickedness, then infidelity becomes their interest; for they cannot otherwise defend and excuse a wicked life, but in denying the truth which opposeth it; that man only stands fair for the entertaining of truth, who is under the power of no lust, because

SERM. he hath nothing to seduce him, and draw him aside.
 CCXLII. in his enquiry after truth; he hath no interest but
 to find truth: he hath the indifference of a traveller,
 who is not inclined to one way more than another,
 but is only concerned to know the right way. Such
 indifferency of mind every good man hath; he is
 ready to receive truth, when sufficient evidence is of-
 fered to him, because he is not concerned that the
 contrary proposition should be true: if a man be ad-
 dicted to any lust, he is not likely to judge impar-
 tially of things: and therefore our SAVIOUR doth
 with great reason require this disposition to qualify a
 man for the discerning of truth, John vii. 17. "If
 "any man will do God's will, he shall know the
 "doctrine, whether it be of God, or whether I
 "speak of myself." He that is desirous to do the
 will of God, he is likely to judge indifferently con-
 cerning any doctrine that pretends to be from God;
 for if there be not good evidence for it, he hath no
 reason to deceive himself, by entertaining that as
 from God, which he hath no assurance that it is so;
 and if there be good evidence for it, he hath no rea-
 son to reject it: but if a man be enslaved to any
 vice or lust, he is not free to judge of those mat-
 ters which touch upon his interest; but is under a
 great temptation to infidelity, because he must needs
 be unwilling to acknowledge the truth of that doc-
 trine which lies so cross to his interest.

Thirdly, this does not excuse the infidelity of men,
 that the devil is in some sort the cause of it; be-
 cause he cannot blind our minds, unless we consent
 to it: he can only suggest false principles to us, but
 we may choose whether we will entertain them; he
 can only tempt us to be wicked, he cannot force us

to be so whether we will or not : as we may resist the SERM. dictates, and quench the blessed motions and sug- CCXLII. gestions of GOD'S SPIRIT, and too often do : so may we " resist the devil," and repel or quench those fiery darts which he casts into our minds, though we do not do it so often as we should. We cannot resist the motions of GOD'S SPIRIT without injury to ourselves : but we may safely oppose the suggestions of the devil ; and we may do it with success, if we sincerely endeavour it. So GOD hath promised, that " if we resist the devil, he shall flee from us : " but if we voluntarily consent to his temptations, and suffer ourselves to be blinded by him, the fault is our own, as well as his, and we are guilty of that infidelity which we suffer him to tempt us into. And this will appear, if we consider,

Fourthly, the wickedness and unreasonableness of infidelity. The scripture every where gives it a bad character, calling it, " an evil heart of unbelief, " to depart from the living GOD." Not to believe those revelations of GOD, which are sufficiently propounded to us, is " an apostasy from the living " GOD," a kind of atheism, and an argument of a very evil temper and disposition. And therefore St. John speaks of infidelity, as the highest affront to GOD imaginable, and as it were a giving GOD the lye, 1 John v. 10. " He that believeth not the " record which GOD hath given of his SON, is said " to make GOD a liar."

The greatest and clearest testimonies that ever GOD gave to any person in the world, were to JESUS CHRIST, and yet how full of infidelity were the Jews, to whom those testimonies were given ? They

SERM. are the great patterns of infidelity, who resisted such
 CCXLII. immediate evidence ; and by the characters which the
 new testament gives us of them, we may judge of
 the evil and unreasonableness of infidelity : and if we
 consult the history of the new testament, we shall
 find infidelity described by such characters and pro-
 perties, and accompanied with such qualities, as shew
 it to be a very evil and unreasonable spirit. The
 principal of them are these.

1. Monstrous partiality, in denying that which had
 greater evidence than other matters which they did
 believe.

2. Unreasonable and groundless prejudice.

3. A childish kind of perverseness.

4. Obstinacy, and pertinacious persisting in error.

5. Want of patience to consider and examine what
 can be said for the truth.

6. Rudeness and boisterous falling into uncivil
 terms.

7. Fury and outrageous passion.

8. Infidelity is usually attended with bloody and
 inhuman persecution. But the treating on these par-
 ticulars I reserve for another subject *.

The third and last thing contained in the text, is
 the dangerous state of those who having the gospel
 propounded to them, yet do not entertain and believe
 it ; the apostle tells us, they are in a lost and perish-
 ing condition ; “ if our gospel be hid, it is hid to
 “ them that are lost.”

I say of those who have the gospel propounded to
 them. As for those to whom the gospel was never
 offered, they shall not be condemned for their un-
 belief

* See the following three sermons on John iii. 19.

belief of it: God will not punish them for not be-
lieving the revelation which was never propounded
to them, but for sinning against "the law written
"in their hearts." So the apostle hath stated this
matter, Rom. ii. 12, 14, 15. they that have a law
revealed to them by God, shall be "judged by
"that law:" but they that are without such a law,
shall be "judged without the law, by the law which
"is written in their hearts." Those persons and
nations in the world, to whom the gospel was not
revealed, shall not be condemned for not believing
it; but for sins committed by them against the light
of nature, and the law which is written in every
man's breast.

But those who have the gospel propounded to
them, and yet continue in unbelief, their case is the
most dangerous of any persons in the world, whether
they be speculative or practical infidels.

1. For speculative infidels (of whom I have been
principally speaking) we may guess how great their
condemnation shall be, by the greatness of their sin,
which I have endeavoured fully describe to you,
with all its aggravations. It is called, Heb. iii. 12.
"an evil heart of unbelief, to depart from the
"living God." ἐν τῷ ἀποστῆναι ἀπὸ Θεοῦ ζῶντος. Infi-
delity is a kind of apostasy from God. 'Tis said
to be the giving of God the lye, 1 John v. 10. "He
"that believeth on the Son of God, hath the wit-
"ness in himself: he that believeth not God, hath
"made him a liar." And we cannot but think
that God will severely punish those who put such
affronts upon him. It is but equal, that they who
resist the clearest light, should "have their portion
"in utter darkness."

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2. For the practical infidels, those who in words acknowledge the gospel to be true, “but in works deny it;” their condition is every whit as bad as the others; nay, I had almost said, that it shall be more tolerable at the day of judgment for the speculative infidel, than for them. He who denies the truth of the christian religion, and lives contrary to the precepts of it, he acts suitably to his principles; but he that owns the truth of the gospel, and lives a wicked life, offers violence to those principles which he hath entertained.

For if we profess ourselves christians, by this profession we declare to the world, that we believe that the Son of God hath delivered that doctrine to the world, which we call the gospel, and hath promised to be “the author of eternal salvation to them that obey him,” and hath threatened men with eternal misery in case of disobedience; and that we make not the least doubt, but that both in his promises and threatenings God will be as good as his word: but in the midst of this profession, we live contrary to the holy precepts of the gospel, “in ungodliness and worldly lusts,” in profane swearing, by a trifling and irreverent use of the great and glorious name of God, in the neglect of God, and of the duties of religion, in the profanation of his day, in drunkenness and filthy lusts, in fraud and oppression, in lying and perjury, in wrath and malice, in enmity and uncharitableness one toward another; this very thing, that we have made profession of the gospel, will be an aggravation of our condemnation. Do we think, that at the day of judgment we shall escape by pleading this for ourselves, that we believed the gospel, and made profession of it? No! “out of

“our own mouths we shall be condemned ;” for it seems “we knew our master’s will, and yet did it not ;” we were convinced that we ought not do such things, and yet we did them ; we believed the glorious promises of the gospel, and yet we “neglected this great salvation,” as a thing not worthy the looking after ; we were verily persuaded of the intolerable and endless torments of hell, and yet we would leap into those flames.

Nothing can make more against us, than such an apology as this ; our very excuse will be the highest accusation and charge that can be brought against us, and out of our own confession we shall be condemned.

All that now remains, is to make some application of this discourse which I have made to you concerning the truth of the christian religion ; which I should do in these two particulars.

First, to persuade us to a firm belief of the christian religion. And,

Secondly, to live according to it. But as to this, I have prevented myself in some former discourses. *

* See Sermons ccxxiv and ccxxviii.

S E R M O N CCXLIII.

The excellency and universality of the christian revelation, with the sin and danger of rejecting it.

J O H N iii. 19.

And this is the condemnation, that light is come into the world, and men loved darkness rather than light, because their deeds were evil.

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The first
sermon on
this text.

AT the 16th verse of this chapter our SAVIOUR declares to Nicodemus (who was already convinced by his miracles, that he was “ a teacher come from God,”) the great love and goodness of GOD to mankind in sending him into the world, to be the SAVIOUR of it, “ GOD “ so loved the world, that he gave his only begotten SON ; that whosoever believeth in him, should “ not perish, but have everlasting life.” Considering the great wickedness of mankind, it might justly have been feared and expected, that GOD should have sent his SON into the world upon a different errand, to have punished the wickedness of men, and to have destroyed them from off the face of the earth; but he tells us at the 17th verse, that “ GOD sent not his SON into the world to condemn the world, but that through him the world “ might be saved;” and that the only way to avoid this condemnation, and to obtain that salvation which GOD designed for us, is “ to believe on “ him

“ him whom GOD hath sent :” verse 18. “ He SERM.
CCXLIII.
“ that believeth on him, is not condemned ; but he
“ that believeth not, is condemned already, because
“ he hath not believed in the name of the only be-
“ gotton SON of GOD.” He is condemned by this
very act of rejecting the SON of GOD, because he
rejects the only way whereby falvation is to be had ;
and to aggravate the condemnation of such persons,
our SAVIOUR here in the text represents himself
and his doctrine, as “ a light come into the world,”
on purpose to discover to us our sinful and miserable
condition, and the way of our recovery out of it, and
falvation from it ; and those that believe not on him,
who do not entertain and welcome this clear and
gracious discovery of GOD’s love and goodness to
mankind, as doing the absurdest thing imaginable,
and making the most preposterous choice, preferring
darkness before light : “ this is the condemnation,
“ that light is come into the world, and men loved
“ darkness rather than light because their deeds were
“ evil.”

In which words there are six things observable.

First, the description which is here given of our SA-
VIOUR and his doctrine, they are called “ a light.”
“ Light is come,” that is, the SON of GOD preaching
the doctrine of life and falvation to men.

Secondly, the universal influence of this light ;
“ light is come into the world.” It is designed for
illumination and instruction, not only of a particular
place and nation, but of a whole world.

Thirdly, the excellency and advantages of this
doctrine above any other doctrine or institution, even
that of the jewish religion, which was likewise imme-
diately

SERM. diately from God ; they are all but darkness in comparison of it, “ light is come into the world, and men
 CCXLIII. “ loved darkness rather than light.”

Fourthly, the absurdity and unreasonableness of rejecting the doctrine of the gospel ; 'tis a preferring darkness before light. “ Men loved darkness rather than light ;” that is, they chose rather to continue in their former ignorance, than to entertain this clear and most perfect discovery of God's will to mankind.

Fifthly, the true reason and account of this absurd choice : “ men loved darkness rather than light, “ because their deeds were evil.”

Sixthly, the great guilt of those who reject the doctrine of the gospel ; by this very act of theirs “ they are condemned,” nay they condemn themselves, because they reject the only means of their salvation : “ this is the condemnation,” this very thing condemns them, and argues the height of their folly and guilt, that when light is come into the world, they preferred darkness before it. I shall discourse distinctly on these particulars.

First, we will consider the description which is here given of our SAVIOUR and his doctrine ; they are called “ light ;” “ light is come into the world.” Light is a metaphor frequently used in scripture for knowledge, especially for spiritual and divine knowledge ; and those who teach and instruct others are said to be lights. So our SAVIOUR is frequently called “ the light of the world, and the true light ;” and his disciples, who were to instruct the world, are called “ light,” “ ye are the light of the world ;” and the doctrine of our SAVIOUR is likewise called “ a
 “ light,”

“light,” “the light of the glorious gospel of SERM.
“CHRIST,” 2 Cor. iv. 4. And ’tis with respect CCXLIII.
to his doctrine, that he is here said in the text to be
“a light come into the world:” which phrase of
“coming into the world,” does not so immediately
refer to his nativity, as to his commission from
God; for this phrase, “of coming into the world,”
is of the same importance with that of being “sent
“from God:” as verse 17. where he says of him-
self, that “God sent him not into the world, to
“condemn the world;” and here in the text, “this
“is the condemnation, that light is come into the
“world;” that is, that when God sent his Son on
purpose to preach such a doctrine, men should re-
ject it and set it at nought: and in this sense, this
phrase of “coming into the world,” is I think
frequently used in the new testament, for “coming
“in God’s name, upon some message to the world.”
So chap. vi. ver. 14. some of the Jews being con-
vinced of our SAVIOUR’s divine commission, express
it thus; “of a truth this is that prophet which was
“to come into the world.” So chap. xii. 46. speak-
ing of himself as sent of God, says he, “I am
“come a light into the world,” he had said just
before, “he that seeth me, seeth him that sent me;”
and then he adds, “I am a light come into the
“world.” There is one text indeed, where this
phrase seems to be taken for being “born into the
“world,” chap. i. 9. “And that was the true
“light, which enlightens every man that cometh
“into the world;” but several of the fathers, as
St. Cyril and St. Augustin, read this text otherwise,
and that with great probability, considering the use
of this phrase every where else; I say, they read
it

SERM. it thus. “ This was the true light which coming
 CCXLIII. “ into the world, enlighteneth every man ;” that is,
 which was sent from God to enlighten all mankind :
 and so this phrase “ of coming into the “ world,”
 refers not to mens being born into the world,
 but to our SAVIOUR’s being sent from God ; and
 this our SAVIOUR seems to distinguish from his
 birth, John xviii. 37. “ To this end was I born,
 “ and for this cause came I into the world, that I
 “ might bear witness to the truth ;” meaning that
 he was not only born, but commissioned by God for
 this end.

But enough for the explication of this phrase, the
 proper importance whereof is not unworthy our
 knowledge, especially since a sect amongst us build
 their doctrine of a light within them, and born with
 them, sufficient to conduct every man to salvation,
 upon that text I mentioned before, “ this was the
 “ true light, which enlightens every man that comes
 “ into the world,” for which there is no pretence,
 if we read it, as the original will very well bear it,
 “ this was the true light, which coming into the
 “ world, enlightneth every man.” And so our SA-
 VIOUR says of himself, chap. xii. 46. “ I who am the
 “ light, am come into the world.”

But that which I principally intended under this
 head, is the unfolding of the metaphor, which runs
 through the text, that so we may come at the plain
 sense and meaning of it, namely why our SAVI-
 OUR, or (which is all one) the doctrine which he
 preached to the world, is represented to us by
 “ light.” And here I might tell you that the doc-
 trine of the gospel is called “ a light,” with regard
 to its chearing and reviving nature ; for “ light

“ (says Solomon) is sweet, and it is a pleasant thing SERM.
“ to the eye to behold the sun :” so the gospel is CCXLIII.
“ glad tidings of great joy.” In regard likewise of
its purity ; as light is the purest of all corporeal
beings, so the doctrine of the gospel doth enjoin a
greater holiness and purity, than any other religion
ever did. And (not to be tedious in slight things) in
regard of its sudden communication and speedy pro-
pagation in the world. As light darts itself from
east to west in a moment ; so the gospel was pro-
pagated with incredible swiftness, and did in a very
short space diffuse itself over the world. Thus I
might tell you, that in these and many more such
respects, the doctrine of the gospel is called “ a
“ light :” but I do not love to hunt down a me-
taphor ; for I know very well that the scripture
(like other authors) useth a metaphor only to one
purpose at one time ; and though many more simili-
tudes may by fancy be found out, it is certain, but
one is intended ; which I take notice of on purpose
to reprove the vanity and injudiciousness of chasing
metaphors farther than ever they were intended :
for a metaphor is commonly used to represent to our
minds the first and most obvious likeness of things.
Thus the doctrine of the gospel is called “ light,”
in respect of the clearness of its discovery, it being
one of the chief and most obvious properties of
light, to discover and make visible itself, and o-
ther things. So the apostle tells us, Ephes. v. 13.
“ But all things that are reprov’d, are made ma-
“ nifest by the light :” and in this respect and no
other, the doctrine of the gospel is here called “ a
“ light ;” because it clearly discovers to the world
those things, which they were either wholly ignorant
or

SERM. or uncertain of before ; and withal it carries its own
 CCXLIII. evidence along with it, and hath plain characters of
 its own divinity upon it.

And here I might shew at large these two things :

First, what discoveries the doctrine of the gospel hath made to the world.

Secondly, what evidence it brings along with it of its own divinity, that it is from God.

First, what discoveries the doctrine of the gospel hath made to the world. It hath more clearly discovered,

1. The nature of God, which is the great foundation of religion.

2. Our own sinful and miserable state.

3. The way and means of our remedy and recovery out of it.

4. A more perfect and certain law and rule of life.

5. A more powerful assistance, for the aid and encouragement of our obedience.

6. And lastly, the gospel hath more clearly discovered to us the eternal rewards and punishments of another world, which are the great arguments to obedience and a holy life. I shall go over these as briefly as I can, having elsewhere * treated more largely on some of them.

1. In the doctrine of the gospel we have a clear discovery made to us of the nature of God ; which is the great foundation of all religion. For such as mens notions and conceptions of God are, such will their religious worship and services of him be ; either worthy of him, and becoming his great and glorious majesty : or vain and superstitious, answerable

* See his grace's sermons published by himself, Vol. I. Sermon 5.

able to the idol of their own imagination: and such will be the actions of their lives; for all men make their God their example, and esteem it an essential piece of religion, to endeavour to be like him. Now the gospel gives us the most true and perfect character of the divine nature, most agreeable to reason, and the wisest and best apprehensions of mankind, such a character as is apt to beget in us the highest love and reverence towards him, and to engage us to the imitation of him by the constant practice of holiness and virtue, representing him to us as most amiable for his goodness, and most dreadful for his power and justice, describing him to be a pure spirit, which the heathen did not generally believe; and consequently to be worshipped in such a manner, as is most suitable to his spiritual nature, concerning which the Jews were infinitely mistaken: for God did not command sacrifices to the Jews, and all those external and troublesome observances, because they were most agreeable to his own nature; but because of the grossness of their apprehensions, and the carnality and hardness of their hearts. God did not prescribe this way of worship to them, because it was best; but because the temper of that people, which was so very prone to idolatry, would admit of no other.

The gospel likewise discovers to us more clearly the goodness of God, and his great love to mankind, one of the best and strongest motives in the world to the love of God. The heathen did generally dread God, and look upon him as fierce and revengeful, and therefore they studied by all means to appease him, even by human sacrifices, and offering up their own children to him; and all along

in

SERM. in the old testament, though there be plain and express declarations of the goodness of God, yet he is generally described as very terrible and severe: but the gospel is full of gracious declarations of God's love and mercy to mankind. In the old testament he is usually stiled "the LORD of hosts," "the great and terrible God;" but in the new testament, he represents himself in a milder stile, "the GOD of love and peace, the FATHER of our LORD JESUS CHRIST," and in him "the FATHER of mercies, and the GOD of all patience and consolation." And this difference between the stile of the old and new testament was so remarkable, that one of the greatest sects in the primitive church (I mean that of the Gnostics, which was subdivided into many other sects) did upon this found their heresy of two principles or gods; the one evil and fierce and cruel, whom they called the GOD of the old testament; the other kind and loving and merciful, whom they called the God of the new.

2. The gospel hath likewise more clearly discovered to us our own sinful and wretched state; that being made upright, and originally designed by God to live in an holy and happy condition, and endued with sufficient power for that purpose, we by our wilful transgression and disobedience of an easy law given to our first parents, are sunk into a wretched state of ignorance and weakness, of sin and sorrow, and thereby are become estranged from God, and obnoxious to his wrath and displeasure, and utterly unable to help and recover ourselves out of this sad and miserable state. And this is a great advantage to us, to understand the truth of
our

our condition, and the worst of our case; because a just sense of it will prompt us to seek out for a remedy, and make us ready to embrace it when it is offered to us. And therefore in the

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3. Place, the gospel hath plainly discovered to us the way and means of our recovery out of this wretched condition: namely, that in tender commiseration of our miserable and helpless condition, God was pleased to send his Son, his only Son, into the world to assume our nature, and “to be made in all things like unto us, sin only excepted,” to dwell among us, to converse with us; that he might instruct us in the way to happiness, and lead us therein by the example of his holy life; and that by his death he might be a propitiation for our sins, and purchase the forgiveness of them, and obtain eternal redemption for us. So that here is an adequate and perfect remedy discovered in the gospel every way answerable to the weakness and impotency, the degeneracy and guilt of mankind, “God having laid help upon one that is mighty, and able to save to the utmost all those that come to God by him.” He took our nature upon him and became man, “that he might bring us to God,” and by restoring us to his image and likeness, might repair those woful ruins which sin had made in us; and to obtain the pardon and forgiveness of our sins. “God spared not his own Son, but freely gave him to death for us all;” and “having raised him from the dead, hath sent him to bless us, in turning us away every one from our iniquity.” So that by this means, the great doubts and fears of mankind, concerning the way of appeasing the offended just-

SERM. ice of GOD, are removed and satisfied. The gospel
 CCXLIII. having given us full assurance, not only that GOD
 is reconciled to us, and willing after all our offences
 and provocations to become our friend; but that
 he hath established the way and means of it; so
 that "if any man sin, we have an advocate with
 "the FATHER, JESUS CHRIST the righteous, who
 "is the propitiation for our sins, and for the sins
 "of the whole world." And this is a peculiar
 advantage of the christian religion, to assure us
 of the forgiveness of sins, of the manner how
 it is procured, and the certain terms upon which
 it is granted, which neither by the light of nature,
 nor by any revelation from GOD, was clearly dis-
 covered before.

4. The gospel hath likewise revealed to us a
 more certain and perfect law and rule of life. It
 hath fixed our duty, and made it more plain and
 certain in all the instances of it, than either the
 light of nature, or the utmost improvement of that
 light by philosophy, or than the jewish religion had
 done before. It hath cleared our duty in some in-
 stances which the light of nature had left doubtful,
 or which the subtle disputes of men had made so.
 It hath heightened our duty in several instances;
 and those things which had not the clear force of
 law before, but were only the counsels of wiser men,
 it hath turned into strict precepts, and made them
 necessary parts of our duty. It commands universal
 love and kindness, and good-will among men, and
 perfect forgiveness of the greatest injuries and of-
 fences: and inculcates these precepts more vehement-
 ly, and forbids all malice and revenge more strictly
 and peremptorily, than any religion or philosophy
 had

had done before ; as will fully appear to any one who S E R M.
will but attentively read and consider our SAVIOUR'S CCXLIII.
sermon upon the mount.

I cannot now enlarge, in giving a particular account of the excellent laws and precepts of our religion, relating to GOD, our neighbour, and ourselves ; I shall only say of them, that they all tend to the perfection of our nature, and the raising of it to the highest pitch of virtue and goodness that we are capable of in this life, and to qualify and dispose us for the felicity of the next ; that they every way conduce to the benefit and advantage of particular persons, singly considered, and to the peace and welfare of human society ; in a word, they all conspire in the glory of God, and the comfort and happiness of man : and no religion that ever was in the world, nor no philosophy, can shew such a system of moral precepts, in which, as there is nothing vain and faulty, so neither is there any thing defective and wanting ; so that St. James doth with great reason call it “ a perfect law.”

5. The gospel doth also discover and offer to us a most powerful assistance for the aid and encouragement of our obedience, abundant help and strength to enable us to the performance of all that which GOD requires of us. It offers us wisdom to enlighten our dark minds, and to direct us in doubtful and difficult cases. James i. 5. “ If any of
“ you lack wisdom, let him ask of GOD, that giv-
“ eth to all men liberally, and upbraideth not ;
“ and it shall be given him.” Our SAVIOUR hath promised “ to give his HOLY SPIRIT to them that
“ ask it,” to help our weakness, and to raise our courage, to strengthen us against the power and

S E R M. force of strong and violent temptations, and to assist
CCXLIII. us in all our conflicts with our spiritual enemies, and
to comfort and support us in all our afflictions and
sufferings.

And without this all the other advantages which our religion affords us would signify little. For what would the knowledge of our sinful and miserable state avail us, without power to rescue ourselves out of it? What is the pardon of our sins past, without strength against them for the future? What would signify the most complete rule of life, and the most perfect pattern of holiness and virtue, without ability in some measure to observe it and live up to it? Without this necessary aid and support, we might despair of resisting the temptations, and mastering the difficulties of a christian course, of subduing the power of bad inclinations, and breaking the course of vicious habits, and bearing up against the violence of extreme suffering and persecution for righteousness sake; without this gracious assistance we can do nothing of all this; and by the help of this, we may become, as St. Paul expresseth it, “ more than conquerors.”

6. And lastly, the gospel hath clearly discovered to us, the eternal rewards and punishments of another world, which are the great incentives and arguments to obedience, and a patient and constant continuance in well-doing. The gospel (as the apostle to the Hebrews tells us) is in this respect “ a better “ covenant” than the law, “ being established up- “ on better promises,” and having the sanction of more severe and terrible threatenings. These great and powerful arguments to keep mankind within the bounds of their duty, which the wisest of the
Hea-

Heathen had some doubt of, and which were but SERM.
very imperfectly revealed to the Jews, are clearly CCXLIII.
made manifest by the gospel. So the apostle tells
us, that “ life and immortality are brought to light
“ by the gospel;” and that “ therein the wrath
“ of God is revealed from heaven, against all un-
“ godliness and unrighteousness of men.” And
this gives the gospel a mighty power and influence
over the minds of men. “ Now God commands
“ all men every where to repent,” and obey his
laws; “ because he hath appointed a day in which
“ he will judge the world in righteousness by that
“ man, whereof he hath given assurance unto all
“ men, in that he hath raised him from the dead.”
The resurrection of CHRIST from the dead, is a
sensible demonstration to all mankind of another life
after this, and consequently of a future judgment.

I might proceed to shew, in the second place,
that as the gospel is “ a light,” in respect of its
clear discovery of other things to us, so likewise of
itself, and its own divine authority.

It is a holy and reasonable doctrine, suitable to the
highest and best improved reason of mankind, and
plainly tending to our perfection and happiness; both
for the sublimity of its mysteries, and the simplicity
and excellency of its precepts, every way worthy to
have God for its author, and most likely to pro-
ceed from him, and from none else. In a word, it
is a doctrine in all respects so excellent and perfect,
that it is beyond the compass of human under-
standing to imagine any thing better; and impos-
sible that any religion materially differing from this,
should be so good. No religion that ever was, or

SERM. which the wit of man can devise, can give us juster
 CCXLIII. notions of God, a truer account of ourselves, better
 rules of a good life, and arguments more powerful
 to persuade us to goodness, than the christian religion hath done. And the intrinsic goodness and excellency of any religion, goes half way in the proof of its divinity; to which, if God be pleased to add the external confirmation of plain and unquestionable miracles, it amounts to a full demonstration, and hath all the evidence that it is possible for any religion to have, that it is from God.

But this is a very large argument, which I have handled in some other discourses *. All therefore that I shall at present add, is an inference or two from what I have been discoursing upon this argument, suited to the solemnity of this season †.

I. We should welcome this light which is come into the world, with all possible expressions of joy and thankfulness. The doctrine of the gospel is the most glorious light that ever shone upon the world; the best news that ever arrived to mankind. Light is a chearful thing; “the light of the eyes (says Solomon) rejoiceth the heart, and good news maketh the bones fat.” When the angel brought the news of our SAVIOUR’S birth to the shepherds, with what joy does he relate it to them? Luke ii. 10. 11. “Behold, I bring you good tidings of great joy, which shall be to all people. For unto you is born this day, in the city of David, a SAVIOUR, which is CHRIST the LORD.” And Matth. ii. 10. When the wise men saw the star which pointed

at

* See Sermons ccxxix, ccxxx, ccxxxi, and the preceding Sermons in this volume.

† Preached on Christmas-day.

at the place of his birth, and conducted them to it, SERM.
'tis said, "they rejoiced with great joy." CCXLIII.

And whenever we commemorate the breaking in of this glorious light upon the world, I mean the birth of our blessed SAVIOUR, how should our hearts be filled with joy, and our mouths with praises! We should every one of us break out into that hymn of the blessed mother of our LORD, "my soul doth magnify the LORD, and my spirit hath rejoiced in GOD my SAVIOUR:" for he hath regarded me and all mankind in our low estate. He was pleased to come down from heaven, to save us from hell; and to become man, that he might "bring us to GOD;" and was contented to be miserable, that he might make us happy; and he did declare this mighty affection to us, when we were not only unworthy of his love, but even beneath the consideration and regard of his pity; for "what is man, that GOD should be thus mindful of him? or the SON of man that the SON of GOD should visit him;" that he should condescend to inhabit our nature, and "to dwell among us." All mankind may with equal or greater reason say, as the centurion once did to him, "LORD, we are not worthy that thou shouldest come under our roof." What means this amazing condescension, that thou shouldest leave thy glory, to be thus obscured; and come from GOD, to be "despised and rejected of men:" and quit the regions of bliss and happiness, to become "a man of sorrows, and acquainted with grief!" was it for us that thou didst all this? yea, for our sakes, who never had done any thing for thine, who may be ashamed to re-

SERM. member, that we were grievous sinners and bitter
 CCXLIII. enemies to thee, when all this was done for us.

Thus we should celebrate the memory of this blessed season, and as often as the year returns, with great joy and thankfulness commemorate the great blessings which this day brought to the world, and say with David, "this is the day which the LORD hath made; we will be glad and rejoice therein." Abraham and David "saw this day, but far off; and yet they rejoiced:" how should we then be transported with joy, to whom this day is come, and "upon whom the sun of righteousness is long since risen, with healing and salvation under his wings."

II. Let us "walk in this light." This expression the scripture useth to signify what use we should make of the advantages and opportunities, which by the glorious light of the gospel are afforded to us, John xii. 35. "Walk while ye have the light; lest darkness come upon you." Ephes. v. 8. "For ye were sometimes darkness; but now are ye light in the LORD: walk therefore as children of the light." Rom. xiii. 11, 12, 13, 14. "It is now high time to awake out of sleep: for now is our salvation nearer than when we believed. The night is far spent, the day is at hand: let us therefore cast off the works of darkness, and let us put on the armour of light. Let us walk honestly as in the day; not in rioting and drunkenness, not in chambering and wantonness, not in strife and envying: but put ye on the LORD JESUS CHRIST, and make not provision for the flesh, to fulfil the lusts thereof."

This

This counsel is proper for christians at all times, SERM. CCXLIII.
who live under the light of the gospel : but more
especially at this time, when we commemorate the
coming of this light into the world. Nothing can be
more unfuitable and contrary to it, than works of
darkness, I mean sin and wickedness, and those abo-
minable vices, which too many are apt to indulge
themselves in at this time, more especially such as
the apostle names in the text just now mentioned,
“ rioting and drunkenness, chambering and wanton-
ness, contention and quarrelling.” We should at
this time more especially put off those vices, and
“ put on the LORD JESUS CHRIST,” that is, be
clothed with all those graces and virtues, which in
the precepts of his religion, and the example of his
life, he hath recommended to us. This is the time
when the “ word was made flesh,” and put on our
nature : and what return can be more proper for us
at this season, than “ to put on the LORD JESUS ;
“ and to make no provision for the flesh, to fulfil
“ the lusts thereof.”

Nay at this time we should retrench more than
usual from our excess and superfluity, both because
of the crying necessities of the poor, who are very
numerous ; and likewise for the relief of our distressed
and persecuted brethren, who are fled to us for
shelter from the barbarous rage of their persecu-
tors. What we would have done for the honour
of CHRIST at another time, let us now do for the
relief of his members ; and whatever kindness we
shew to them, he will take it as done to himself.
We have great cause to be chearful at this time, and
we may testify our joy by feasting, or any other
lawful expressions of it : but we must not so feast, as
“ to

SERM. " to forget the affliction of Joseph, and not to re-
CCXLIII. " member that we also are in the body," and liable
to the same suffering. We must therefore take heed,
that our table do not become a snare to us; and
that our mirth do not degenerate into sensuality and
sin.

Every christian hath so many arguments against
sin, that we should abstain from it at all times: but
of all other times, we should be most ashamed to
be guilty of any lewdness or wickedness, when we
are remembering " the appearance of the SON of
" GOD, to bring salvation to us," and " to teach
" us to deny ungodliness and worldly lusts, and to
" live soberly, righteously and godly in this present
" world."

To conclude, let us by all that hath been said be
persuaded so to celebrate the memory of CHRIST's
first coming, to " take away sin by the sacrifice of
" himself," that we may with comfort and joy wait
" for the blessed hope, and the glorious appearance
" of the great GOD and our SAVIOUR JESUS
" CHRIST," when " he shall appear a second time
" without sin unto salvation."

S E R M O N CCXLIV.

The excellency and universality of the christian revelation, with the sin and danger of rejecting it.

J O H N iii. 19.

And this is the condemnation, that light is come into the world, and men loved darkness rather than light, because their deeds were evil.

I N discoursing on these words, I have already SERM. CCXLIV. considered the first thing observable in them, viz. the description which is here given of our SAVIOUR and his doctrine; they are called “a The second sermon on this text. light.” Light is come,” that is, the SON OF GOD, bringing the doctrine and knowledge of salvation to the world; it being one of the first and most obvious properties of “light,” to discover and make visible itself and other things. “That which makes all things manifest, is light;” and accordingly I have observed, that the christian religion hath made a clear discovery to us of many great and important things, of which the world was either ignorant or doubtful before: and likewise that it brought great evidence along with it of its own divinity, and that it was from GOD.

I proceed now to the second thing observable in the text, viz. the universal influence of this light. “Light is come into the world.” The doctrine of
the

SERM. the gospel was designed for the illumination and in-
 CCXLIV. struction, not of one particular place and nation;
 but of the whole world. Thus our SAVIOUR and
 his doctrine are described by old Simeon, Luke ii.
 30, 31, 32. "For mine eyes have seen thy sal-
 vation, which thou hast prepared before the face
 of all people: a light to lighten the Gentiles, and
 the glory of thy people Israel." To the Gen-
 tiles, who were before in darkness, he is said to be
 "a light:" but to the Jews, who had the light of
 divine revelation in some degree before, he is said to
 be "a glory," that is, a brighter and more glo-
 rious light; "a light to lighten the Gentiles, and
 the glory of thy people Israel." And John i. 9. he
 is called "the true light, which lighteth every man
 that cometh into the world," that is, which was
 sent into the world for the illumination of all man-
 kind. And John viii. 12. he says of himself, "I am
 the light of the world."

Now that the revelation of the gospel by JESUS
 CHRIST, was designed for the whole world, for
 the instruction, and comfort, and benefit of all man-
 kind, I shall endeavour to make out by these three
 steps:

I. In that it is very credible, that GOD would
 some time or other make such a revelation of his
 will, as might be sufficient to direct and bring man-
 kind to happiness.

II. That before the revelation of the gospel
 by JESUS CHRIST, no such general and universal
 declaration of GOD's will had been made to the
 world.

III. That the revelation of the gospel hath all
 the marks and characters of an universal revelation,
 and

and was certainly by God designed for that purpose. SERM.
CCXLIV.

I. It is very credible, that God would some time or other, when his infinite wisdom and goodness should think it most fit and seasonable, make such a revelation of his will to the world, as might be sufficient to direct and bring mankind to happiness. The consideration of the divine goodness is very apt to induce such a persuasion: for what more reasonable to believe concerning God, than that he who is "good to all," and the common father of all mankind, not "the God of the Jews only, but "the God of the Gentiles also," (as St. Paul argues to this purpose, in his epistle to the Romans) should some time or other, in pity and compassion of the ignorant and degenerate and helpless condition of mankind, provide some universal remedy, by such a general revelation of his will, as was every way fitted and calculated to be of universal use and benefit, to direct all men in the way to happiness, and if they be not wanting to themselves to bring them to it; that in the doubtings and uncertainties of mankind concerning the will of God, and the rule of their duty, he should give an universal law, equally obliging all men, to be a perfect and standing rule and measure of their duty in all times and places, and which shall never stand in need of any addition, amendment, or alteration.

For why should we think that God, who is so equally related to us all, should confine the effects of his goodness to a few persons, or a small part of mankind, to one particular family or nation? that he whose bounty is so equal and unconfined in the disposing of temporal blessings, should be so partial

SERM. partial and narrow in the bestowing of his greatest
 CCXLIV. and best gifts, those spiritual blessings which concern
 our souls, and our happiness to all eternity? How
 can we in reason imagine, that he who “causeth
 “his sun to rise, and his rain to fall” upon the whole
 world, should vouchsafe that great and most glo-
 rious light of his divine and heavenly truth only to
 a few, and shower down his spiritual blessings upon
 a small part of the earth, leaving all the rest of the
 world a wilderness and a land of darkness? Thus to
 think of GOD, is no ways agreeable to those large
 apprehensions which mankind have always had of
 the goodness of GOD, by no means honourable to
 the divine nature; and therefore it is most highly
 probable that GOD should one time or other make
 such a revelation of his will to mankind, as is of
 universal concernment and advantage.

II. I shall shew that before the revelation of
 the gospel by JESUS CHRIST, no such general and
 universal declaration of GOD's will hath been made
 to the world. All the revelations which GOD had
 made to men before, were either made to some par-
 ticular persons upon particular occasions; or to one
 particular nation and people, I mean that of the
 Jews. Those which were made to particular per-
 sons were so narrow and limited, and of so private
 concernment, that they signified nothing to the ge-
 nerality of mankind; nor could the knowledge of
 them, with any degree of evidence have been pro-
 pagated. As for that revelation which was made to
 the Jews, it was both in its nature and design, and
 in all the circumstances of it, plainly limited to one
 particular place and nation. And as GOD discovered
 no intention, so neither were there any proper means
 and

and endeavours used to proclaim and propagate it, as SERM.
an universal law and institution obligatory to all man- CCXLIV.
kind.

From the nature and all the circumstances of the jewish law, it clearly appears to have been designed for a municipal law and constitution, for the governing of one particular people and nation, within a certain territory and spot of ground, to which a great part of the precepts of it are peculiarly limited, and could be exercised and practised no where else; and not intended to take in and oblige all the nations of the earth. For when this law was first given, GOD plainly directs it to the people of Israel, beginning it in this form of words, "hear, O Israel, "the LORD thy GOD is one GOD;" and "I "am the LORD thy GOD, who brought thee out "of the land of Egypt, and out of the house of "bondage;" and he frequently tells them, "that "he had separated them from all the people upon "the face of the earth, to be a peculiar people to "himself:" to be governed by peculiar civil laws, and by a particular way of religious worship; for which reason the apostle calls the jewish law and religion, "a wall of partition," which did separate and divide them from all other people; so that even towards the strangers that lived among them, they were not bound in several cases to observe the same laws towards them, which they were obliged strictly to observe towards their brethren; as in the case of usury, and remitting debts, and releasing of servants.

Besides that, a great part of their religion was confined to a particular place, which GOD should appoint, and which at last by his appointment was

SERM. fixed to the temple at Jerusalem, to which they were
CCXLIV. obliged to resort thrice every year ; which it was impossible for other nations to do. Not to mention that the great promises and threatenings of that law, were of plenty and prosperity, or a famine and affliction in that land. To all which we may add, that a great part of the laws and ordinances of that religion, were peculiarly fitted and suited to the genius and inclination of that people, and made in condescension to their capacities and prejudices, to the obstinacy and hardness of their hearts.

It is very clear likewise, that God did not design to spread and propagate this law any farther than that people ; since no means were appointed by him, no endeavours were used to that end ; no apostles and prophets were sent forth to proclaim and publish this law to other nations ; nay, the providence of God seems rather purposely to have designed to conceal them and their law, till the time drew near of God's revealing to the world a more perfect institution, which should have its rise and beginning there, and from thence be published over the world, according to that of the prophet, that " the law " should come out of Sion, and the word of the " LORD from Jerusalem : " but the law which was given by Moses to the Jews, was for many ages in a great measure concealed from the rest of the world. So the Psalmist tells us, Psal. cxlvii. 19, 20. " He " sheweth his word unto Jacob ; his statutes and " judgments unto Israel. He hath not dealt so with " any nation ; and as for his judgments, they have " not known them." Nay, on the contrary, God had provided by several strict and severe laws, that the people of Israel should have as little commerce

and conversation as was possible with other nations ; a plain sign he never intended their religion to be propagated among them : but this is so manifest from the nature of the jewish religion, and all the circumstances of its constitution, that I need not to labour any farther in the proof of it. I proceed therefore to shew, in the

III^d and last place, that the revelation of the gospel hath all the marks and characters of an universal revelation, and was certainly designed by God for that end. And this will clearly appear, by considering these four things :

1. The person by whom God was pleased to make this revelation to the world.

2. The nature and design of it.

3. The prophecies and predictions concerning it. And,

4. The remarkable countenance and assistance which was given from heaven to the first publishers of it.

1. If we consider the person by whom God was pleased to make this revelation to the world, we cannot think that God had any less design therein than the recovery and reformation of mankind. Now the person employed by God to make this revelation of his will, was the eternal and only begotten Son of God, assuming our nature and appearing in it ; I say the eternal and only begotten Son of God.

So the apostle to the Hebrews describes him, and thereby distinguisheth him from all the former prophets, by whom in former ages God had made particular revelations of himself to men, Heb. i. 1, 2,

3. " God who at fundry times, (or by several parts and degrees) and in divers manners, spake in

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H

" times

SERM. " times past unto the fathers by the prophets ; hath
 CCXLIV. " in these last days spoken unto us by his SON,
 " whom he hath appointed heir of all things, by
 " whom also he made the worlds : who being the
 " brightness of his glory, and the express image
 " of his person, and upholding all things by the
 " word of his power." What a character is here
 of the greatest and most glorious person, that ever
 was employed to men ! a messenger of God to man ;
 and who so fit as " the SON of GOD," who came
 from " the bosom of his FATHER" to reveal his
 will to all mankind ? who so proper as he, who
 made the world, and upholds and preserves it, to
 be sent upon so great an errand, as the recovery and
 salvation of the whole world ? and on the contrary,
 who so unfit, as this great and glorious person, to
 be employed in any less and lower design, than that
 which was of general concernment to the benefit
 and happiness of all mankind ? So great an ambas-
 sador was not fit to be sent to treat of any thing less
 than an universal peace, and the reconciliation of the
 whole world.

And then if we consider him, as assuming human
 nature, and thereby equally related to all mankind,
 it was fit he should be concerned for that whole race
 of creatures to whom he had so nearly allied him-
 self, and whose nature he had vouchsafed to assume.
 It became him, who became man, to shew himself
 a lover of mankind, to reveal the will of God, and
 the way to happiness, to all men, to be an uni-
 versal teacher and law-giver ; that by the direction
 of his doctrine, and the obedience of his laws, " all
 " men might come to the knowledge of the truth,
 " and be saved."

2. If

2. If we consider the nature of this revelation, it ^{SERM.} will appear to be designed for the general use and ^{CXLIV.} benefit of mankind. The matters revealed, whether concerning God or ourselves, this world or the other, are of universal concernment. The laws of this religion are not calculated for any particular place or nation, one more than another; and the arguments and encouragements to the obedience of these laws are equally fitted to work upon all capacities and conditions, and apt to affect them alike, because they equally touch the interests and concernments of all men: for since all men are equal in the immortal duration of their souls, and equally obnoxious to the judgment of God in another world, it concerns all men alike to understand their duty, and the way to gain the favour of God, and thereby to escape the endless and intolerable miseries, and to obtain the unspeakable and everlasting happiness of another world: and to direct, and excite men hereto, the whole revelation of the gospel, all the doctrines, and all the laws of it, do plainly tend. There is nothing in the christian religion, but what is fit for all men to know and practise, in order to their present peace and comfort, and their future and eternal happiness; and these things surely are of universal and equal concernment to mankind.

3. The predictions and prophecies concerning the Messias, and the doctrine which should be delivered to the world, do plainly shew, that this revelation should be universal. In the first promise to Abraham, it is plainly foretold, "that in his seed," that is, as the Jews always understood it, "in the Messias, all the nations of the earth should be blessed." And there are innumerable predictions

SERM. in the prophets of the old testament to this purpose.

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I shall mention but a few of many. Psal. ii. 8.

“ Ask of me (saith GOD to his SON) and I shall
 “ give thee the Heathen for thine inheritance ; and
 “ the uttermost parts of the earth for thy posses-
 “ sion.” Psal. lxxii. 17. speaking of the MESSIAS,
 “ men shall be blessed in him, all nations shall call
 “ him blessed.” Isa. xlix. 6. “ I will give thee
 “ (says GOD there concerning him) for a light to
 “ the Gentiles, that thou mayest be my salvation to
 “ the ends of the earth.”

4. And lastly, this revelation was actually published to the world, GOD giving remarkable countenance and assistance from heaven to the first preachers and publishers of it.

The apostles of our LORD and SAVIOUR, in virtue of his commission, and by his express command just before his ascension, went forth and published his doctrine to the world. Having upon the day of pentecost, according to his promise which he made to them before his death, and renewed to them after his resurrection, when he was going to his FATHER, I say, having according to his express promise, received the miraculous gifts of the HOLY GHOST, they began to publish the gospel, first to the Jews ; and being rejected by the greatest part of them, they preached it to the Gentiles ; and as a confirmation of the doctrine which they preached, they witnessed the resurrection of CHRIST from the dead, as the great evidence of the truth of his doctrine ; and to give confirmation to this testimony, GOD enabled them to work miracles, and particularly to raise the dead to life, which was a confirmation of their testimony beyond all exception :

tion : and in order to the more speedy and effectual propagation of this doctrine, God was pleased to work a strange miracle, never wrought upon any occasion before or since ; he endowed the apostles and first preachers of christianity with a power of speaking all languages, which they had occasion in their travels to make use of, without ever having studied or learned them ; and this miraculous gift was common to all the apostles, and continued till the gospel was published by them in most parts of the then known world ; greater evidence than which God cannot be imagined to give of his design to communicate the knowledge of this doctrine universally, and to all nations : and if it was rejected in some places, and the progress of it obstructed in others, this doth not hinder but that God designed it to be universally known, and that it is in its own nature fit to be a law to all mankind ; and God, who in his secret counsel hath not thought fit as yet to grant the knowledge of this doctrine of salvation to some parts of the world, may in his due time send this “ light into those dark places of the “ earth, which are full of the habitations of barbarousness and cruelty,” and grant the knowledge of salvation to them. In the mean time, what cause have we to bless God, to whom this light came so soon, and who have enjoyed it so long ! “ let us “ walk in the light, while we have it ; lest darkness “ overtake us.”

And thus much may suffice to have spoken of the second particular which I observed in the text, namely, the universal influence of this light ; “ light is “ come into the world.”

SERM. I proceed to speak briefly to the third particular
 CXXIV. I mentioned, viz. the excellency and advantages of
 this doctrine of the christian religion, above any
 other doctrine or institution, even that of the jewish
 religion, which was likewise immediately from God.
 They are all but darkness in comparison of it.
 "Light is come into the world." But in this I
 have in a great measure prevented myself, in what I
 have already discoursed upon the two former heads,
 and therefore I shall say the less upon it: for by
 what I have already said, it will in good measure ap-
 pear, how obscure and imperfect the discoveries both
 of natural light, and of the jewish religion were, in
 comparison of the clear and bright revelation of the
 gospel; and that both concerning the nature of God,
 and the worship which is most suitable and accept-
 able to him; and likewise concerning the rule of
 our duty, and the rewards and punishments of an-
 other life, which are the great motives and argu-
 ments to obedience; and which as to the greatest
 part of mankind, both Jews and Gentiles, had but
 a very weak and faint influence before. And how
 could it well be otherwise, since the apprehensions
 of mankind concerning these things were dark and
 doubtful!

What gross and imperfect notions the Heathens
 had concerning God, we may judge by their uni-
 versal and abominable idolatry. How uncertain their
 morality was (which yet was much the best part of
 heathenism) we may see by their endless differences
 and disputes concerning moral duties. How waver-
 ing they were concerning the immortality of souls,
 and the rewards of another world, we may judge by
 the different and contrary opinions of the greatest
 philo-

philosophers about these points. So that heathen-
 ism was plainly defective, both in the knowledge
 of GOD, which is the great foundation of all reli-
 gion ; and the precepts of a good life, which are the
 rule of it ; and the assurance of immortality, which
 is the great motive to religion, and the only solid
 comfort and support of the mind of man under the
 evils and afflictions of life, and against the fears of
 death.

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And the jewish religion likewise, though it had
 manifold advantages of paganism, yet was it very
 short and imperfect in many of these respects which
 I have mentioned : besides that it gave no clear and
 well-grounded assurance of the pardon and forgive-
 ness of sins ; and the rewards of another world were
 very obscurely revealed under that dispensation. So
 that well might the apostle, upon comparison of
 the law and the gospel, say, “ the law made no-
 “ thing perfect : but the bringing in of a better
 “ hope did.”

And as for evidence which those religions had, pa-
 ganism pretended to no other authority for their
 idolatrous worship, but the long custom and practice
 of the world. This Symmachus the heathen insists
 upon, instead of all other arguments, *sequimur ma-
 jores nostros, qui feliciter secuti sunt suos*, “ we follow
 “ our forefathers, who happily followed theirs.”

The jewish religion indeed produced good evi-
 dence that it was from GOD : but it is very desti-
 tute of arguments to prove, that it was either an
 universal, or perfect, or final revelation of GOD's
 will to mankind ; nay, it was expressly said in their
 law, “ that GOD would raise up another prophet
 “ among them, to whom they were to hearken,

SERM. "and to be obedient in all things." The MESSIAS
 CCXLIV. was plainly foretold, and spoken of both in the law
 and the prophets, as one that was to be the author
 of a more perfect law and institution, which in due
 time was to be revealed to the whole world, "to
 "be a light to lighten the Gentiles," as well as to
 be "the glory of the people of Israel:" and accord-
 ingly "in the fulness of time" he came, and by a
 greater confirmation of miracles, than the jewish re-
 ligion had, he put a period to that weak and im-
 perfect institution: and to shew the law of Moses was
 at an end, God hath now for above 1600 years
 "taken away their place and nation," destroyed
 their temple, and laid waste their country, and dis-
 persed them over the world; so that they are not ca-
 pable of observing a great part of their religion. By
 all which it appears, that whatever was in the world
 before, was but darkness, in comparison of the glo-
 rious light of the gospel; so that well might our
 evangelist say, "this light was the true light, which
 "coming into the world, enlightens every man;"
 "the true light" by way of excellency and emi-
 nency; as our SAVIOUR calls himself "the true
 "bread which came down from heaven;" so the
 doctrine of the gospel is called "the true light," in
 opposition to those false or imperfect lights which
 were in the world before. This doctrine of the
 christian religion is a perfect and therefore a final
 discovery of the will of God to man; because it can
 receive no amendment, therefore it shall never have
 any change or alteration.

I will conclude this particular with that inference
 which the apostle to the Hebrews makes, from the
 consideration of the perfection and unchangeableness
 of

of the gospel dispensation, which he calls "a king-
dom which cannot be shaken," Heb. xii. 28, 29. SERM.
CCXLIV.
"Wherefore we receiving a kingdom which can-
not be moved, let us have grace, whereby we may
serve God acceptably, with reverence and godly
fear. For our God is a consuming fire." The
better, and more perfect, and more unchangeable
our religion is, the better we should be; the more
steadfastly should we persist in the sincere profession
and practice of it: and if we do not, the heavier will
be our condemnation; "for our God is a con-
suming fire." I proceed to the

Fourth particular observable in the text, viz. the
great unreasonableness of rejecting this doctrine of
the gospel. It is to make the absurdest judgment
and choice that is possible; to prefer darkness be-
fore light. "Men loved darkness rather than
light;" that is, they chose rather to continue in
their former ignorance, than to entertain the most
clear and perfect discovery of God's will to man-
kind. And what can be more absurd and unrea-
sonable, when the difference is so palpable, and the
choice so plain? That man is blind that cannot dis-
tinguish light from darkness; and he is very per-
verse and obstinate, who seeing the difference between
them, will "choose darkness rather than light."
Such was the unreasonableness of those who rejected
the gospel, when it was revealed to the world; since
nothing is more clear to an impartial and considerate
man, than that the most christian religion is the best
and most perfect institution, of the greatest and most
universal concernment to mankind, that ever was re-
vealed to men; and our blessed SAVIOUR, who was
the author and founder of this religion, gave greater
evidence

SERM. evidence that he came from God, than any other
CCXLIV. prophet or teacher that ever was; and the worship
of God which this religion prescribes, is most agree-
able to his nature, being a spiritual and a reasonable
service, fit for men to give, and for God to accept.
In a word, the precepts of the gospel are more ex-
cellent in themselves, and better calculated for the
happiness and perfection of human nature; and the
motives and arguments to persuade men to the obe-
dience of these precepts, more powerful, than those
of any other religion that ever yet appeared in the
world.

So that the difference between the christian reli-
gion, and all others that have been received and
professed in the world, is so plain and apparent, that
nothing but passion or prejudice, or interest, or
some other faulty principle, can hinder any man
from yielding his assent to christianity. The com-
parison is almost equal to that betwixt light and
darkness; and therefore our SAVIOUR had great
reason to speak so severely of the infidelity of the
Jews who rejected such a doctrine, propounded to
them with so much evidence and advantage. And
because the Jews are the great scripture pattern of
perverse infidelity and opposition to the truth, it will
not be amiss to take our estimate and measure of the
unreasonableness of this spirit and temper, from the
properties and characters which we find of it in the
Jews, most of which do still inseparably accompany
the spirit of infidelity where-ever it is; that as face
answers face in water, so does the infidelity of this
present age resemble that of the Jews in our SA-
VIOUR's time, in all those perverse and unreason-
able qualities which did then attend it; and there-
fore

fore I shall take notice of some of the chief of them, as I find them dispersed up and down in the history of the new testament.

But this, and what remains to be said upon this argument, I must reserve for another discourse.

S E R M O N CCXLV.

The excellency and universality of the christian revelation, with the sin and danger of rejecting it.

J O H N iii. 19.

And this is the condemnation, that light is come into the world, and men loved darkness rather than light, because their deeds were evil.

WHEN I began to discourse on these words, I observed in them several particulars. As, SERM.
CCXLV.

First, the description which is here given of our SAVIOUR and his doctrine, by the metaphor of "light." "Light is come." The third sermon on this text.

Secondly, the universal influence of this light. "Light is come into the world."

Thirdly, the excellency and advantages of the doctrine of the gospel, above any other doctrine or institution even that of the jewish religion, which was likewise immediately from God. They are all but "darkness," in comparison with this. "Light is come into the world; and men loved darkness."

These

SERM. These three I have dispatched, and have entered
 CCXLV. upon the fourth particular observable in my text,
 viz.

The great unreasonableness of rejecting this doctrine of the gospel. It is to make the absurdest judgment and choice that is possible, to prefer darkness before light. "Men loved darkness rather than light." The difference between the christian religion and all others is so very plain, that our SAVIOUR had great reason to speak thus severely of the infidelity of the Jews. And because the Jews are the great scripture pattern of perverse infidelity, I proposed the taking an estimate of the unreasonableness of this spirit and temper, from the characters which we find of it in that people, most of which do still inseparably attend the spirit of infidelity, wherever it is. I shall therefore take notice of some of the chief of those characters, as I find them dispersed up and down in the history of the new testament, and they are these which follow :

I. Monstrous partiality, in denying and rejecting that revelation, which had not only as great but greater evidence, than other things which they did believe, and were ready enough to entertain. They "believed Moses and the prophets;" and the great confirmation which was given to them, was by the miracles which God wrought by them. Those miracles they did not see themselves; but received them from the testimony of their forefathers, being brought down to them by a very credible and uncontrolled revelation, which they had no reason to doubt of the truth of: but they themselves saw the miracles which our SAVIOUR wrought, which were more and greater than the miracles of Moses, and all the prophets,

phets, so that they were eye-witnesses of that divine power which accompanied our SAVIOUR; and yet they rejected him and his doctrine; nay, so unequally did they deal with him, that after they had rejected him, notwithstanding all the evidence which he gave that "he came from God," they greedily received and ran after false prophets who gave no such testimony. So our SAVIOUR foretels concerning them, John v. 43. and so afterwards it came to pass, "I am come, saith he, in my FATHER'S name," that is, have given sufficient evidence that he sent me, and "ye received me not; if another shall come in his own name, him will ye receive." "In his own name," that is, without any miracles to prove that he comes from God.

And to shew their horrible partiality yet more, after they had refused the clearest testimony that God could give of him, they were contented to accept of the disagreeing testimony of two witnesses against him, and upon that uncertain evidence to put him to death.

And this hath been the temper of those that oppose the truth in all ages, and in all kind of matters. Thus the church of Rome will needs understand those words of our SAVIOUR, "this is my body," in the sense of transubstantiation, contrary to the plain intention of them, and in contradiction to the reason and senses of all mankind; and yet they will not understand the plain institution of the sacrament in both kinds. And thus the atheists, who will not believe that there is a God, which made the world, can yet swallow things ten times harder to be believed; as that either the world was eternal of itself, or the matter of it; and that the parts of
this

SERM.
CCXLV.

SERM. this matter being in perpetual motion, did after in-
 CCXLV. finite trials and attempts at last happen to settle in
 this order in which we now are ; that is, that this
 admirable frame of the world, which hath all the
 characters upon it of deep wisdom and contrivance,
 was made merely by chance, and without direction
 and design of any intelligent author ; so partial is in-
 fidelity, as to assent to the most absurd things, ra-
 ther than believe the revelations of God, or to own
 those principles, which are naturally imprinted upon
 the minds of men : and have the general consent of
 mankind.

II. Another usual concomitant of infidelity is un-
 reasonable and groundless prejudice. The Jews were
 strangely prejudiced against our SAVIOUR, and that
 upon the weakest and flightest ground, as that his
 original was known among them. John vii. 27.
 “ Howbeit we know this man whence he is : but
 “ when CHRIST cometh no man knoweth whence
 “ he is.” Surely they were very ready to take ex-
 ceptions against him, that would urge this for an ob-
 jection ; for what if his original were known, might
 he not be from God for all that ? Moses was a great
 prophet, and yet it was very well known from whence
 he was ; and it was no where said in the old testa-
 ment that his original should be unknown ; nay on
 the contrary it was plainly declared, that he was to
 be of the tribe of Judah, of the lineage of David,
 and to come out of Bethlehem.

Another prejudice against him was the meanness of
 his parents, and of the manner of his education.
 Matth. xiii. 54. “ Whence hath this man his wis-
 “ dom, and these mighty works ? Is not this the
 “ carpenter’s son ? Is not his mother called Mary ?
 “ and

“ and his brethren James, and Joses, and Simon, SERM.

“ and Judas ? And his sisters, are they not all with CCXLV.

“ us ? Whence then hath this man all these things ?

“ And they were offended at him.” And so likewise, John vii. 15. “ How knoweth this man let-

ters, having never learned ?” A strange kind of unreasonable prejudice ! They could not believe him to be an extraordinary person, because his parents and relations, his birth and manner of breeding were so mean, because he had been brought up to a trade, and not bred up like one of their Scribes and Rabbies ; as if God could not inspire a man with all those gifts which men ordinarily acquire by study and pains ; and as if it had not been reasonable to expect, that the MESSIAS who they believed was to be the greatest prophet that ever was, should be thus inspired. Now in all reason the argument is strong the other way, that sure he was an extraordinary prophet, who all of a sudden gave such evidence of his great knowledge and wisdom, and did such mighty works ; because this could not be imputed to his breeding and education, since that was so mean, and therefore there must be something extraordinary and divine in it ; thus another man who had been free from prejudice, would have been apt to reason.

Another unreasonable prejudice was grounded upon a spiteful and malicious proverb, concerning the country where our SAVIOUR was brought up, namely Galilee, John i. 46. “ Can any good thing “ come out of Nazareth ?” And John vii. 41. “ Shall CHRIST, that is the MESSIAS, come out “ of Galilee ?” And ver. 52. “ Search and look ; “ for out of Galilee ariseth no prophet.” Nathanael indeed, who was a sincere good man, was easily wrought

SERM. wrought off from this prejudice, and was contented
 CCXLV. to be convinced of the contrary by plain evidence,
 when Philip desired him "to come and see," John
 i. 47. But the Jews it seems laid great weight
 upon it, as if this one thing had been enough to con-
 fute all our SAVIOUR's miracles, and after they had
 shot this bolt at him, the matter had been clearly con-
 cluded against him.

But wise and unprejudiced men do not use to be
 swayed and carried away with ill-natur'd proverbs;
 nor do they believe the bad characters which are
 given of a country, to be universally true without
 exception, as if every country did not yield some
 brave spirits, and excellent persons, whatever the ge-
 neral temper and disposition of the inhabitants may
 be observed to be; or as if a man could not be an
 inspired prophet, unless he were bred in a good air;
 nor be sent by God unless men approved the place
 from whence he came. The Bœotians among the
 Greeks were a heavy and dull people, even to a
 proverb; and yet Pindar a great poet and wit was
 born in that country. The Scythians were so barba-
 rous, that one would have thought surely no good
 could come thence; and yet they yielded Anacharsis,
 none of the meanest of the philosophers. The Idu-
 means were aliens and strangers from the common-
 wealth of Israel; and yet Job, one of the most excellent
 persons that ever lived, was born among them. God
 can bring forth eminent instruments out of any place
 and nation he pleases, out of stones raise up children
 unto Abraham. Our conceits are no rule to him,
 nor does he govern the world by our foolish pro-
 verbs; "his ways are not as our ways, nor his
 thoughts as our thoughts."

And

And thus some in our days have endeavoured to slur the reformation, by calling it “ the northern heresy ;” as if the light of truth were at as great a distance from these northern parts, as that of the sun, and nothing but error and heresy could come thence ; which is just such a conceit, and grounded upon as wise a reason as that of the Donatists, who would needs have truth and the catholic church confined to Afric, because that was the southern part of the world, and because it is said in the song of Solomon, concerning the church, “ tell me, O thou whom my soul loveth, where thou feedest, and where thou makest thy flocks to rest at noon.”

Another mighty prejudice against our SAVIOUR we find mentioned John vii. 48. “ Have any of the rulers or pharisees believed on him ?” For this there seems to be some better colour than for the other ; because the example of superiors and of persons thought to be more knowing, is considerable indeed in a doubtful case, and a good rule of action when we have no better ; but ought to be of no force to sway our judgment against clear and convincing evidence. Zedekiah and the princes of Judah would not hearken to Jeremiah : yet was he a true prophet for all that, though it was not their pleasure to think so. Sometimes there is a gross and palpable corruption in those who ought to be guides to others, and they have a visible interest in opposing and rejecting the truth. And this was the case of the pharisees and rulers among the Jews, in our SAVIOUR’s time. Any one that had known them, and judged impartially concerning them, would rather have chosen to have followed any example than theirs. Religion may sometimes be in greatest dan-

SERM. ger, from those who ought to understand it best;
 CCXLV. and to be the greatest supports of it. So it was of old
 among the Jews, when the prophet complains that
 “ their leaders had caused them to err :” and so it
 hath been among christians, in the great degeneracy
 of the Roman church ; their popes and their general
 councils as they call them, have been the great cor-
 rupters of christianity, and seducers of christendom,
 which made Luther to say with truth and sharpness
 enough, *Religio nunquam magis periclitatur quam inter*
reverendissimos ; “ religion is never in greater danger
 “ than amongst the most reverend ;” meaning the
 pope and the cardinals : when those who ought to
 teach and reform others, are guilty of the greatest
 errors and corruptions themselves.

I will mention but one prejudice more, which we
 find John ix. 16. “ This man (say the Jews con-
 “ cerning our SAVIOUR) is not of GOD, because
 “ he keepeth not the sabbath-day.” This indeed had
 been a considerable exception, if it had been true ;
 and therefore our SAVIOUR takes great care to vin-
 dicate himself from this aspersiō ; he shews that the
 law of the sabbath did not oblige in all cases, and
 that being a positive precept, it ought to give place
 to moral duties, which are of perpetual obliga-
 tion, and therefore he bids them “ go and learn
 “ what that meaneth, I will have mercy and not
 “ sacrifice ;” and the plain meaning of that saying
 was, that when positive institutions interfere with any
 moral duty, they cease to oblige in that case ; that
 the sabbath was designed for the ease and benefit of
 men, and not for their grievance and burden ; and
 therefore where the life of man is concerned, the law
 of the sabbath ceaseth ; as in case of necessity, “ Da-
 “ vid

“ vid did eat of the shew-bred, and was blameless,” SERM. though by a positive law it was forbidden for any ^{CCXLV.} man to eat of it, but the priests only. Lastly, from a general practice in a common case among themselves, it being allowed by their own law, “ to take an ox or an ass out of a pit on the sabbath-day ;” and therefore much more to heal one on the sabbath-day, and “ to loose a daughter of Abraham, that “ had been bound eighteen years,” as our SAVIOUR invincibly argues.

Upon the like prejudice several churches and communions in the world will not allow others to be good christians, and in a state of salvation, because they do not lay the same weight that they do upon positive institutions, not of divine, but of mere ecclesiastical authority ; in which they are more unreasonable than the Jews *. But I proceed to a

III. Concomitant of their infidelity, and this was a childish kind of perverseness. Being strongly prejudiced against our SAVIOUR, they were so peevish and froward that nothing would satisfy them. And of this he himself gives us a remarkable instance, * Matth. xi. 16, 17. “ But whereunto shall I liken “ this generation ? It is like unto children sitting in “ the markets, and calling unto their fellows, and “ saying, we have piped unto you, and ye have “ not danced ; we have mourned unto you, and ye “ have not lamented.” The business was this, the Jews found fault with John the baptist, because his habit and conversation were so rough and severe ; and yet our SAVIOUR could not please them neither, who was of a quite different temper. “ John

I 2

“ the

* Of this see more, Vol. vii. Serm. cxvii, cviii, cxix.

SERM. "the baptist came in the way of righteousness, and

CCXLV. "they received him not;" his way was very strict

and severe, "he came neither eating nor drinking,"

was very strict in his diet and manner of living, of a coarse carriage and melancholy temper; "and they

"said he had a devil." He was to be a preacher of repentance, and his garb was suitable to his employment.

Our SAVIOUR was of a more easy and familiar and conversible temper, suitable to a preacher of pardon and forgiveness; "the SON of man came

"eating and drinking; and they said, behold a

"wine-bibber and a glutton, a friend of publicans

"and sinners." Now what could be more childish and perverse, than to be pleased with nothing? By this it plainly appeared, that whatever garb he had

put on, whatever his carriage had been, they would have found fault with it, and have made some exception against it; at this rate it was impossible for him to escape the censure of men so perversely disposed; and therefore our SAVIOUR fitly compares them to "children playing in the mar-

"kets," who were neither pleased with mourning nor dancing.

And this is the humour of infidelity, and of those who oppose the truth, to cavil and make exceptions at every thing, and to argue against religion and the principles of it, from contrary topics, and arguments that are inconsistent with one another.

There are other instances of this perverseness in the Jews; as that when they believed Moses, and had a mighty veneration for him; yet they would not believe him when he testified concerning the

MESSIAS. So likewise they looked upon John

the

the baptist, as a prophet; but yet would give no SERM. credit to his testimony concerning CHRIST. Nay, CCXLV. so froward were they, that when our SAVIOUR had wrought the greatest and plainest miracle that could be, "in feeding 5000 persons with five loaves, and "two little fishes;" yet, as if this had been nothing, they still call upon him to work a miracle, John vi. 30. "What sign workest thou, that we "may see and believe?"

IV. Another usual concomitant of infidelity, is obstinacy, and pertinacious persisting in error. This likewise was the temper of the Jews, not to be convinced by any evidence that could be offered to them. When our SAVIOUR had several times put them to silence, so that they were not able to answer him, yet they obstinately persisted in their former conceit, and stiffly held the conclusion, though they were not able to make good the premises. Matth. xxii. Our SAVIOUR confuted the Sadducees about the resurrection, and put them to silence; and then undertook the Pharisees, and they could not answer him neither; both of them continued in their opinion, though each of them thought the other to be clearly baffled and confuted.

This obstinacy of theirs our SAVIOUR makes a great aggravation of their infidelity, Matth. xxi. 31, 32. "Verily I say unto you, that the publicans and "the harlots go into the kingdom of God before "you. For John came unto you in the way of "righteousness, and ye believed him not: but the "publicans and the harlots believed him. And ye "when ye had seen it, repented not afterward, that "ye might believe him."

SERM. Nay, which was the most unreasonable of all,
 CCXLV. when they could not answer his arguments, nor deny the miracles which he wrought, yet they were resolved not to believe on him, nor to suffer others to confess him, John xi. 47, 48. After he had wrought that great miracle, in raising Lazarus from the dead, after he had lain four days in the grave, they were so far from owning themselves convinced by it, that hereupon they took counsel to put him to death. So the text tells us, that “ many of the
 “ Jews which came to Mary, and had seen the things
 “ which JESUS had done,” namely, the raising of Lazarus, “ believed on him : but some of them went
 “ their way to the Pharisees, and told them what
 “ things JESUS had done.” And now one would have thought, that either they should not have acknowledged this mighty miracle ; or if they had, that they should have been convinced by it that he was from GOD : but the miracle was so notorious, that they could not deny it ; and they were so obstinately set against him, that they would not be convinced by it ; they granted the premises, and yet denied the conclusion, verse 47. “ Then gathered the chief
 “ priests and Pharisees a council, and said, what do
 “ we ? for this man doth many miracles ; if we let
 “ him alone, all men will believe on him.” And it follows, verse 53. “ From that day forth they took
 “ counsel together to put him to death.”

And after he was risen from the dead, and those that bare witness to his resurrection had their testimony confirmed by miracles, yet the Jews continued in the same obstinacy, as if they were resolved to oppose the gospel in despite of all evidence that could

could be brought for it. So we find Acts iv. 15, SERM.
16. that when the rulers and scribes beheld the man CCXLV.
whom the apostles had healed, standing by them,
it is said, " they could say nothing against it. But
" when they had commanded them to go aside
" out of the council, they conferred among them-
" selves, saying, what shall we do to these men?
" for that indeed a notable miracle hath been done
" by them, is manifest to all them that dwell in
" Jerusalem, and we cannot deny it: but that it
" spread no farther among the people, let us straitly
" threaten them, that they speak henceforth to no
" man in this name." What could be more un-
reasonable, than to own the miracle, and yet to reject
the testimony?

V. Another quality which accompanied this spirit
of infidelity and opposition to the truth in the Jews,
was want of patience to consider and examine what
could be said for the truth; a hastiness to pronounce
and pass sentence, before they had heard what could
be said for it. Thus the Pharisees, when they saw
our SAVIOUR cast out devils, they presently, with-
out any farther consideration, pronounce, that he did
it " by the prince of devils," Matth. xii. 44. Had
they not been headily carried on by passion and pre-
judice, they would never have passed this rash sen-
tence. Had they but had patience to have confi-
dered matters, they could not have believed, that the
devil was confederate with CHRIST against himself,
and the interest of his own kingdom.

And as it was then, so it is at this day; many
continue in unbelief and error, not because there is
not evidence enough for the things proposed to
their belief, but because they have not patience

SERM. enough to consider what may be said for them. Nay,
CCXLV. in the church of Rome, that they may retain their
people in their communion, they strictly forbid all
examination of their religion, or so much as to hear
or read what can be said against it; because this is
doubting, and doubting is next to infidelity, a mortal
sin, and a temptation of the devil. There is but one
season and nick of time, wherein they will allow any
of the people to examine and enquire into matters
of religion, and that is when they would gain a man
to their religion, and they allow it then only be-
cause they cannot help it. Some reasons they must
offer to persuade men to be of their church; and
when they offer them, they must allow them to con-
sider them, and judge of the force of them, though
they had much rather they would take their words
for the strength and goodness of them; for they do
what they can to hinder them from advising with
those that will dispute the matter with them: or if
they cannot prevent examination, yet they divert
them as much as they can from any particular en-
quiry into their doctrines and practices; this they
pretend is a tedious and endless course, and there-
fore they commonly direct them to a shorter way,
which is, not to enquire first into the truth of their
doctrines, and the goodness of their worship and prac-
tice; but first to find out the true church, and then
learn of her what doctrines and practices are truly
christian; and by this means they get their religion
swallowed whole, without any particular examination
of their doctrines and practices, which will not bear
the trial; and therefore to make the work short, they
take it for granted, that there is always a visible ca-
tholic church; that this church is infallible in all
matters

matters of faith ; and that the Roman church is the SERM.
visible infallible catholic church, because no other CCXLV.
church pretends to be so ; as indeed there is no reason why any particular church should pretend to be catholic or universal, or to speak plainer, why a part should pretend to be the whole : and all this being admitted, there is nothing more now to be done, but to receive all the doctrines which this church teacheth, without any farther examination of them, because this church being supposed to be infallible, all that she says must be true, though it appears to be never so contrary to scripture, or reason, or sense. But now in this way of proceeding, there are two or three things which seem to be very odd.

1. That men must take their religion in a lump, and not be allowed to examine the particular doctrines and practices of it ; which is to say, they have an excellent religion, but men must by no means examine it, nor look into it. This looks so suspiciously, that a wise man for this very reason, if there were no other, would reject it, because they are so afraid to bring it to a trial.

2. It seems likewise very strange, that when they go to make profelytes, they should take so many things which are in question and controversy between us, for granted ; as that the church in every age is infallible, and that the church of Rome is the infallible and catholic church. They meet indeed sometimes with some easy and willing converts, that will meet them thus far, that is, more than half way : but what if a man will not take all this for granted, but will put them to the proof of it ? Why then he is not so civil as they hoped and expected ;

SERM. expected; and commonly they give over tempting
 CCXLV. him, or at least depart from him for a season, till they
 can find him in a more pliable temper; for it is a
 long work, and requires a great deal of time to
 prove some things, especially to the dull capacity of
 a northern heretic: besides that some things are
 stubborn, and will not be proved, though never so
 much pains be taken to do it; and so are the pro-
 positions now mentioned, towards the proof where-
 of I never saw any argument offered that is within
 distance, or indeed within sight of the conclusion.
 And then,

3. It seems a very strange method of coming to
 know what the true doctrines of christianity are, by
 first knowing which is the true church: for it is not
 the church which makes the doctrines of christianity
 to be true, but the profession of the true christian
 doctrine which makes the church; and therefore we
 must first know which are the true doctrines of chri-
 stianity, the profession whereof makes the true church,
 before we can possibly know which is the true
 church; but which are the true doctrines of chri-
 stianity, is not to be known, but by a particular
 examination of them, and comparing them with the
 rule of the christian faith, "the word of God." But
 they that have a mind to delude men, and keep them
 in error, must never admit their religion to be tried
 by this rule. But to proceed.

VI. Another quality which accompanies infidelity
 and opposition to the truth, is rudeness and boiste-
 rousness, falling into uncivil terms and reproachful
 names. Such was the carriage of the Jews to-
 wards our SAVIOUR; when they were not able to rea-
 son

son with him, they fell to railing at him, John viii. SERM.
48. When he argued against their infidelity in the CCXLV.
calmest manner, and by the strongest and clearest
arguments endeavoured to convince them of the
unreasonableness of it: "which of you, saith he, con-
vinceth me of sin? And if I speak the truth, why
do you not believe? He that is of God, heareth
God's words: ye therefore hear them not, because
ye are not of God. Then answered the Jews, say
we not well, that thou art a Samaritan, and hast
a devil?" They presently call him heretic; for so
the Jews esteemed the Samaritans.

VII. Another quality near akin to this, is fury
and outrageous passion. John vii. 23. The Jews
were in a great passion against our SAVIOUR, "for
healing on the sabbath-day." When the apostles
wrought miracles, it is said, that "the high-priest
and they that were with him were filled with in-
dignation." And when St. Stephen preached to
them, it is said, they gnashed on him with their
teeth." And St. Paul acknowledgeth of himself,
while he opposed the truth of christianity, he was
"mad against all that were of that way."

VIII. And lastly, to mention no more, infidelity
and opposition to the truth is usually attended with
bloody and inhuman persecution; a certain argu-
ment of a weak cause, and which wants better means
of conviction. Thus the Jews treated our SAVI-
OUR; when they could not deal with him by rea-
son, they persecuted him, and "sought to kill him."
John v. 16. and chap. viii. 59. when our SAVIOUR
had answered all their objections, and they had
nothing to reply upon him, "they took up stones
to cast at him;" a sign their reasons were spent,
and

SERM. and that their arguments were at an end. Thus
 CCXLV. infidelity and error betrays its own weakness, and
 wanting of reason on its side, by making use of such
 brutish and unreasonable weapons in its own defence.
 Our blessed SAVIOUR and his apostles never thought
 of propagating their religion by these inhuman and
 barbarous ways. These methods are proper to "the
 " destroyer;" but not to "the lamb of God, and
 " saviour of men." "The son of man came not
 " to destroy mens lives; but to save them;" to do
 good to the bodies and to the souls of men; and
 not to destroy their bodies, no not in order to the
 saving of their souls. All the means that he or his
 apostles used, were teaching and persuading, and that
 with great meekness: "learn of me, for I am
 " meek," saith our LORD: and the apostles every
 where command the teachers of this religion, "to
 " shew all gentleness to all men, and in meekness
 " to instruct those that oppose themselves, if God
 " peradventure will give them repentance to the
 " acknowledgment of the truth." They did not go
 about to convert men by armed force, and ways of
 violence and cruelty. It is a sign that reason runs
 very low with that religion, which had no better ar-
 guments to persuade men to it, than dragoons, and
 the gallies; these are carnal, and therefore not chris-
 tian weapons. So St. Paul tells us, "the weapons
 " of our warfare are not carnal;" and yet they were
 mighty through God, to subdue a great part of the
 world to the belief and obedience of the christian re-
 ligion. Thus I have done with the fourth particular
 in the text, the unreasonableness of infidelity, and op-
 position to the truth. The two remaining ones I
 shall dispatch in a few words.

Fifthly

Fifthly therefore, I observed the true reason and account of mens opposition to the truth, and rejection of it; "men loved darkness rather than light, because their deeds were evil." And indeed darkness is more suitable to a wicked and vicious life, because the deformity of it is not so easily discovered as in the light; this makes the evil of mens actions more manifest, and their faults more inexcusable. Men may pretend other reasons for their infidelity and opposition of the truth, and may seem to argue against the principles of religion in good earnest, and against the reasonableness and truth of christianity, from a real contrary persuasion: but no man that hath these things fairly proposed to him, and with all the advantages they are capable of, and hath the patience to consider the true nature and design of the christian doctrine, but must acknowledge it, not only to be the most reasonable, but the most divine, most likely to come from God, and to make men like God, of any religion that ever yet appeared in the world. If any man reject it, it is not because he hath good and sufficient reasons against it; but because he is swayed by some unreasonable prejudice or passion, or blinded by some lust or interest, which he is strongly addicted to, and loth to part with, and yet he must part with it, if he entertain this religion, and submit himself to the terms and rules of it. This is that which commonly lies at the bottom of infidelity, and is the true reason of their opposition to the truth, that "their deeds are evil." And it is natural for every man to defend himself, and justify his doings as well as he can; and if religion be clearly against him, to set himself with all the despite and malice he can

SERM. against religion, and to hate, and with all his might
 CCXLV. to oppose that which contradicts that course which
 he is in love with, and is resolved to continue in: for as our SAVIOUR reasons in a like case “no
 “man can serve two masters; but either he will
 “hate the one, and love the other; or he will
 “cleave to the one, and quit the other.” Men cannot entertain the truth, and retain their lusts; and therefore, as our SAVIOUR tells us immediately after the text, “every one that doth evil hateth the light,
 “neither cometh he to the light, lest his deeds
 “should be reproved.” The light of truth is as grievous to a bad man, as the light of the sun is to sore eyes; because it lays open and discovers the faults and vices of men, and if they entertain it, will urge them, and put them upon a necessity of reforming their wicked lives; and because they have no mind to this, therefore they resist this the light, and endeavour to keep it out. The vices and lusts of men are so many diseases; and men naturally lothe physic, and put it off as long as they can; and this makes many inconsiderate and wilful men to favour their disease, and take part with it against all counsel and advice; and when the great physician of souls comes and offers them a remedy, they flight and reject him, and will rather perish than follow his prescriptions.

And this was the true reason why the Jews rejected the gospel; they were vicious in their lives, and loth to undergo the severity of a cure; they were not willing to be saved by so sharp and unpleasant a remedy. And this is still the true reason at this day, of mens enmity and opposition to religion, because it declares against their evil deeds, and proclaims open war
 against

against those vices and lusts which they love, and are resolved to live in; so that they have no other way to justify themselves, and their actions, but by condemning and rejecting that which reprove and finds fault with them. SERM. CCXLV.

And here I might shew more particularly, that there are two accounts to be given why bad men are so apt to resist and reject the divine truth, even when it is revealed and proposed to them in the fairest manner, and with the clearest evidence.

1. Because their minds are not so rightly prepared and disposed for the receiving of divine truth. And,

2. Because they have an interest against it, their designs and deeds are evil, they have some worldly interest to carry on, or they are in love with some vice or lust which they cannot reconcile with the truths of God and religion. But this I have done at large elsewhere *. I proceed therefore to the

Sixth and last particular in the text, namely, the great guilt of those who reject the doctrine of the gospel. By this very act of theirs they are condemned, nay they condemn themselves; because they reject the only means of their salvation. "This is the condemnation," this very thing argues the height of their folly and guilt, that when light is come, they prefer darkness before it. If any thing will condemn men, this will; and if any thing will aggravate their condemnation, and make it above measure heavy and intolerable, this will. If it were in a doubtful matter that men made so ill and foolish a choice, the thing would admit of some excuse: but the dispute is between light and darkness. If the christian religion had not so plainly the advantage

* See VOL. VI. *Sermons* lxxxvii, lxxxviii. and lxxxix.

SERM. tage of any other institution that ever was ; if that
 CCXLV. holiness which the gospel commands, and that hap-
 piness which it promiseth, were not infinitely to be
 preferred before the ways of sin and death ; the un-
 believer and the disobedient might have something
 to say for themselves ; but the case is plainly other-
 wise, so that whoever having the christian religion
 fairly and fully proposed to him, doth not believe
 it, or professing to believe it, doth not live accord-
 ing to it, “ hath no cloke for his sin ;” neither the
 one for his infidelity, nor the other for his disobe-
 dience : and if any thing will aggravate the con-
 demnation of men, this will ; for the greater light
 men sin against, the greater is their guilt ; and the
 greater any man’s guilt is, the heavier will be his
 doom. The heathen world that lived for many
 ages “ in darkness and the shadow of death,”
 shall be condemned for sinning against that imper-
 fect knowledge of their duty, which they had from
 the glimmering of natural light ; but they shall be
 “ beaten with few stripes,” their punishment shall
 be gentle in comparison : but what punishment can
 be severe enough for those obstinate infidels that re-
 ject the light and prefer darkness before it ; for those
 impudent offenders, who admit the light of the
 gospel, and yet rebel against it, who do the works
 of darkness, in the midst of this light, at noon-day
 and in the face of the sun ? This consideration the
 scripture frequently urgeth upon those who enjoy the
 light of the gospel. “ I say unto you, it shall be
 “ more tolerable for Tyre and Sidon, for Sodom
 “ and Gomorrah,” the very worst and wickedest of
 the heathen, “ than for you.” “ How shall we
 “ escape, if we neglect so great salvation ?” If ei-
 ther

ther we “ reject the knowledge of the truth, or sin SERM.
“ wilfully after we have received it,” that is apo- CCXLV.
statize either to infidelity, or impiety of life, “ there
“ remains no more sacrifice for sin, nothing but a
“ fearful looking for of judgment and fiery indig-
“ nation, to consume the adversary,” that is, such
implacable enemies of God and his truth; in so
doing we resist and reject our last remedy; and after
God hath sent and sacrificed his only Son for our sal-
vation, we cannot in reason think, “ there remains
“ any more sacrifice for sin,” I have gone over the
several particulars in the text, I shall only make two
or three inferences.

First, if the great design of the Son of God was
to enlighten the world with the knowledge of divine
truth, what shall we think of those, who make it
their great endeavour to stifle and suppress this light,
and to hinder the free communication of it? who
conceal the word of life from the people, and lock
up the knowledge of salvation, contained in the holy
scriptures, in an unknown tongue.

Secondly, having represented the unreasonableness
of infidelity, and the evil concomitants of it in the
Jews, “ let us take heed lest there be in any of us
“ an evil heart of unbelief, in departing from the
“ living God, and lest any of us fall after the
“ same example of infidelity.” Let us not reject
the principles of religion, because they are incon-
sistent with our evil practices, but let us rather en-
deavour to reconcile our lives to the rules of reli-
gion, and resolve to reform those faults which reli-
gion reproves, and which the reason of our own
minds, if we would attend to it, reproves as much
as religion; a clear evidence that we are in the
VOL. XII. K wrong,

SERM. wrong, and religion in the right, because it hath the
CCXLV. best and soberest reason of mankind on its side.

Let us then with all readiness of mind entertain that light which God hath afforded to us, to conduct us and shew us the way to happiness, whether by the principles of natural religion, or by the revelation of the gospel in its primitive purity and lustre, and not as it hath been muffled and disguised by the ignorance and superstition which prevailed in after-ages, till the light of the reformation sprang out, and restored a new day to us, and “called us again out of “darkness into a marvellous light;” which by the blessing of God we have now enjoyed for many years, and which we cannot go about to quench, without incurring the condemnation of the text.

Thirdly and lastly, let us take heed of practical infidelity, of opposing and contradicting the christian religion by our wicked lives and actions. Though we profess to believe the gospel, yet if our “deeds be evil,” we do in effect and by interpretation reject it, and “love darkness rather than “light;” though we assent to the truth of it, yet we “withhold it in unrighteousness,” we resist the virtue and efficacy of it, and do oppose and blaspheme it by our lives; nay, we do as much as in us lies to make others atheists, by exposing religion to the contempt and scorn of such persons, and by opening their mouths against it; as either not containing the laws of a good life, or as destitute of power and efficacy to persuade men to the obedience of those laws. Where, will they say, is this excellent religion, so much boasted of? How does it appear? Look into the lives of christians, and there you will best see the admirable effects of this doctrine,

doctrine, the mighty force of this institution ! And what a shameful reproach is this to us ! What a scandal and disparagement to our holy religion, to see some of the worst of men wearing the badge and livery of the best religion and institution that ever was in the world !

I conclude all with the words of the apostle, Philip. i. 27. “ Only let your conversation be as it becometh the gospel of CHRIST ; and stand “ fast with one spirit, with one mind, striving together for the faith of the gospel.”

S E R M O N CCXLVI.

The ground of bad mens enmity to the truth.

J O H N iii. 19.

For every one that doth evil, hateth the light, neither cometh to the light, lest his deeds should be reprov'd.

AMONG all the advantages which GOD SERM.
CCXLVI. hath afforded mankind, to conduct them to eternal happiness, the light of the christian religion is incomparably the greatest ; which makes it the greater wonder, that at its first appearing in the world, it should meet with such unkind entertainment, and so fierce and violent an opposition. Of all the blessings of nature, light is the most welcome and pleasant ; and surely to the mind of man,

K 2

rightly

SERM. rightly disposed, truth is as agreeable and delightful,
 CCXLVI. as it is to the eye to behold the sun; and yet we find, that when the most glorious light that ever the world saw visited mankind, and truth itself was incarnate, and came down from heaven to dwell amongst us, it was so far from being welcomed by the world, that it was treated with all imaginable rudeness, and was opposed by the Jews, with as much fierceness and rage, as if an enemy had invaded their country, with a design “to take away their place “and nation.” No sooner did the SON of GOD appear, and begin “to send forth his “light and “truth” among them, by the public preaching of his doctrine, but the teachers and rulers among the Jews rose up against him, as a common enemy, and were never quiet till they had taken him out of the way, and by this means, as they thought, quite extinguished that light.

Now what can we imagine should be the reason of this, that a person who gave such clear evidence that he came from God, that a doctrine which carries such clear evidence of its divine original should be rejected with so much indignation and scorn? that light and truth, which are so agreeable to mankind, and so universally welcome, should be so disdainfully repulsed? What account can be given of it, but that which our SAVIOUR here gives in the text? “Light was come into the world, “but men loved darkness rather than light; because their deeds are evil. For every one that “doth evil, hateth the light, neither cometh to “the light, lest his deeds should be reprov’d,” (or “discovered;” for so the word likewise signifies, and may very fitly be so rendered in this place)

“but

“ but (as it follows) he that doth the truth, cometh SERM.
“ to the light, that his deeds may be made mani- CCXLVI.
“ fested, that they are wrought in GOD ;” that is,
that they are of a divine stamp and original. In
which words our SAVIOUR represents to us, the
different disposition and carriage of good and bad
men, as to the receiving or rejecting of truth, when
it is offered to them : they that are wicked and worldly
are enemies to truth, because they have designs con-
trary to it, “ every one that doth evil, hateth the
“ light, neither cometh to the light, lest his deeds
“ should be reproved.” And on the contrary a
good man, “ he that doth the truth,” and sincerely
practises what he knows, “ cometh to the light, that
“ his deeds may be made manifest.”

I shall not need to handle these distinctly, because
in speaking to one, the contrary will sufficiently ap-
pear. That therefore which I shall speak of at this
time, shall be the former of these, viz. the enmity
of bad men, and of those who carry on ill designs
to the truth, together with the causes and reasons of
it, “ every one that doth evil, hateth the light, nei-
“ ther cometh to the light, lest his deeds should
“ be discovered.” Here our SAVIOUR’s doctrine
(as I have shewn in the three last discourses) is re-
presented to us by the metaphor of light, because it
was so clear a revelation of the will of GOD, and our
duty ; and carried in it so much evidence of its di-
vinity, it being the chief property of light to discover
itself, and other things : so that those great and im-
portant truths contained in our SAVIOUR’s doctrine,
are the light here spoken of, and which men of
bad designs and practices, are said to hate and de-

SERM. cline ; “ every one that doth evil, hateth the light,
 CCXLVI. “ neither cometh to the light, lest his deeds should
 “ be reproved.”

In which words two things offer themselves to our consideration.

First, the enmity of wicked men to the truth :
 “ every one that doth evil, hateth the light, neither
 “ cometh to the light.”

Secondly, the ground or reason of this enmity,
 “ lest his deeds should be discovered.”

First, the enmity of wicked men to the truth,
 “ every one that doth evil, hateth the light.” Men
 of ill designs and practices hate the light, and be-
 cause they hate it they shun it, and flee from it, “ nei-
 “ ther cometh he to the light.” Now this enmity
 to truth appears principally in these two things, in
 their resistance, and in their persecution of it,

1. In their opposition and resistance of it. A bad
 man is not only averse from the entertainment of it,
 and loth to admit it, but thinks himself concerned
 to resist it. Thus the Jews opposed those divine
 truths, which our SAVIOUR declared to them ; they
 did not only refuse to receive them, but they set
 themselves to confute them, and by all means to blast
 the credit of them, and to charge them not only with
 novelty and imposture, but with a seditious design,
 and with blasphemous and odious consequences ; they
 perverted every thing he said to a bad sense, and put
 malicious constructions upon all he did, though ne-
 ver so blameless and innocent. When he instructed
 the people, they said he was stirring them up to se-
 dition ; when he told them he was the SON of GOD,
 they made him a blasphemer for saying so ; when he
 healed on the sabbath-day, they charged him with

pro-

profaneness; when he confirmed his doctrine by miracles, the greatest and plainest that ever were wrought, they reported him a magician; when they could find no fault with many parts of his doctrine, which was so holy and excellent, that malice itself was not able to misrepresent it, or take any exception to it, they endeavoured to destroy the credit of it, by raising scandals upon him for his life; because his conversation was free and familiar, they taxed him “for a wine-bibber, and a glutton;” and because he accompanied with bad men, in order to the reclaiming and reforming of them, they represented him as a favourer of such persons, a friend of publicans and sinners.

By these and such like calumnies they endeavoured to disparage his doctrine, and to alienate men from it; being prejudiced against the truth themselves they did what they could to keep others from embracing it; and, as our SAVIOUR, tells us, “shut up the kingdom of heaven against men, neither going in themselves, nor suffering others that were going in, to enter.”

2. The enmity of bad men to the truth likewise appears in their prosecution of it, not only in those that propound it to them, but in all those that give entertainment to it: and this is the highest expression of enmity that can be, to be satisfied with nothing less than the destruction and extirpation of what we hate. And thus the Jews declared their enmity to the gospel. When this great light came into the world, they not only shut their eyes against it, but endeavoured to extinguish it, by persecuting the author of this doctrine, and all those that pub-

SERM.

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lished it, and made profession of it; they persecuted our SAVIOUR all his life, and were continually contriving mischief against him, seeking to intrap him in his words, and so render him obnoxious to the Roman government, and at last putting him to death upon a false and forged accusation, and all this out of enmity, to that truth which he delivered to them from God; as he himself tells us, John .viii. 40. "But now ye seek to kill me, a man which hath told you the truth, which I have heard of God."

But their malice did not rest here, they persecuted in like manner his disciples and followers "casting them out of their synagogues, and forbidding them to speak to the people in the name of JESUS, delivering them up to councils, and condemning them to death." Never did good men shew greater zeal and earnestness for the truth, than these wicked men did against it; so that had our blessed SAVIOUR been the greatest impostor that ever was, and brought the most pernicious doctrine that ever was into the world, they could not have persecuted him with more rage and fury, and given greater testimony of their enmity against him. I pass to the

Second thing I proposed, namely, to enquire into the causes and reasons of this enmity: "every one that doth evil, hateth the light, neither cometh to the light, lest his deeds should be discovered." Here is the bottom of mens malice and enmity against the truth, it lays open their evil deeds and designs; men of honest intentions are not afraid of the light, because it can do them no prejudice; it shews what they ought to do, and they have a desire to know it, that they may do it; "he that doth

“ doth the truth, cometh to the light, that his deeds
“ may be made manifest.” Light is an advantage
to good and virtuous actions, which the more they
are seen and understood, the more they are approved
and esteemed; but they that do evil, “ love darkness
“ rather than light,” because they are afraid their
deeds should be discovered.

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And there is a twofold discovery of their actions,
which bad men are afraid of. They are afraid they
should be discovered to themselves, because that creates
trouble and uneasiness to them; and they are afraid
they should be discovered to others, because that
causeth shame.

1. They are afraid the evil of their actions should
be discovered to themselves, because that creates
guilt and trouble; men do not care to see their own
faults, and to have the vileness of their deeds truly
represented to them. And this no doubt was the
principal reason which set the scribes and pharisees
so much against our SAVIOUR and his doctrine,
because it discovered their hypocrisy to them; and
how beautiful soever they appeared without, in their
affected piety and formal devotion, yet “ like painted
“ sepulchres, they were within full of all unclean-
“ lines and rottenness.” Those real virtues which
our SAVIOUR taught and the practice whereof he
made so necessary to the eternal happiness and sal-
vation of men, were a severe reproof of their lives
and actions, and did discover to them how defect-
ive they were in that righteousness, which alone
will bring men to the kingdom of God: so that
his doctrine must needs be very troublesome to them,
and they did not care to hear it, no more than a
bad

SERM. bad face loves to look in a true glafs; they had
 CCXLVI. flattered themselves before, in a conceit of their own
 righteouſneſs, but when the light came, it diſcovered
 all their ſpots and deformities, ſo that they were no
 longer able to hide them from themſelves; and this
 was a double trouble to them.

(1.) It robbed them of that good opinion which
 they had of themſelves before; and it is no ſmall
 vexation to a man to be put out of conceit with him-
 ſelf. Truth flatters no man, and therefore it is no
 wonder that ſo many are offended at it; a good man
 is ſatiſfied with himſelf, and ſo would bad men ſain
 be too; and therefore truth muſt needs be very un-
 welcome to them, becauſe it attempts to deprive them
 of ſo great a ſatiſfaction, and to chaſe away one of
 the moſt pleaſant deluſions in the world.

(2.) The diſcovery of mens faults fills them with
 trouble and guilt. Truth carries great evidence along
 with it, and is very convincing, and where men will
 not yield to it, and ſuffer themſelves to be convinced
 by it, it gives them a great deal of diſturbance, *gravis*
malæ conſcientiæ lux eſt, ſays Seneca: “light is very
 “troublesome to a bad conſcience,” for it ſhews men
 their deformities whether they will or no; and when
 mens vices are diſcovered to them, they muſt either
 reſolve to perſiſt in them, or to break them off, and
 either of theſe is very grievous.

Some men are ſo habituated to their vices and
 ſo ſtrongly addicted to them by their inclination,
 and attached to them by their intereſt, that they can-
 not quit them without offering the greateſt violence
 to themſelves; it is like “cutting off a right hand,
 “or pulling out a right eye,” as our SAVIOUR
 expreſſes

expresses it. Now to avoid this pain and trouble, SERM. CCXLVI. most men, though they be convinced of their faults, choose to continue in them, and yet this is full as troublesome as the other, though it is hard to convince men of it; there cannot be a more restless state than that of guilt, the stings and torments whereof are continually increased by mens practising contrary to the convictions of their own minds. Perhaps the trouble of repentance and reformation may be as great at first; but all this pain is in order to a cure, and ends in health and ease: but he who goes on in a bad course, after he is convinced of the evil of it, lays a foundation of perpetual anguish and torment, which the longer he continues in his vices will perpetually increase; so that it is no wonder if "they that do evil, hate the light," when it is every way so grievous and uneasy to them.

2. Bad men are enemies to the truth, because it discovers the evil of their actions to others, which causeth shame. The doctrine of the gospel lays open the faults of men, and upbraids them with their vices. Precepts of holiness and virtue are a public reproof to the corrupt manners of mankind; and men hate public reproof, because it shames them before others, and exposeth them to censure and contempt. This made the pharisees so offended with our SAVIOUR's doctrine, because it was so severe a censure of their manners, and abated the reputation of their sanctity and devotion; it discovered them at the bottom to be very bad men; and how "righteous soever they appeared outwardly, to be inwardly full of hypocrisy and iniquity." Now reputation is a tender part, which few men can endure

SERM. ^{CCXLVI.} dure to have touched, though never so justly; and therefore no wonder if bad men be impatient of that truth which lays them open to the world, and do by all means endeavour to suppress and conceal it from themselves and others. Thus I have, as briefly as I could, given you an account of the true ground and reason of the enmity of wicked men against the truth, because it discovers their errors and faults, both to themselves and others.

I shall now only draw two or three inferences from this discourse, by way of application, and so conclude.

I. From hence we may learn the true reason why men are so apt to reject and oppose the principles of religion, both of natural and revealed religion. By the principles of natural religion, I mean those which nature acquaints us with, as the being of God and his providence, the immortality of the soul, and a future state of rewards and punishments after this life: by the principles of revealed religion, those which are revealed in the holy scriptures, especially in the gospel, which is the clearest and most perfect revelation of the divine will that God ever made to the world. Now the reason why men oppose these principles, and endeavour to throw them off, is because they are loth to be under the restraint of them; they are so many checks and fetters to men of ill designs, and bad lives; and therefore no wonder if they bite at them, and endeavour to break them off; they contradict the lusts of men, and fly in their faces when they do wickedly; they are continually pricks in their eyes, and thorns in their sides, and therefore they would fain be rid of them; and therefore there is
a plain

a plain reason why these men oppose the truth, and endeavour to baffle it; because it opposeth and affronts them in those wicked practices, in which they are resolved to continue. I dare not say that all bad men fly thus high, as to endeavour to extinguish the belief of religion in themselves and others; but there are three sorts of men more especially, that think themselves concerned to promote atheism either in themselves or others.

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1. Those who are more enormously wicked, are concerned to be atheists themselves, because the principles of religion are so plainly inconsistent with their practice. This is so visible, that they cannot but see it; and therefore they must declare themselves enemies to such principles, as are so notoriously contrary to the course they live in.

2. Those who, though their lives are not so notoriously bad, have quicker understandings than the common sort of sinners; because these do sooner discern the inconsistency of these principles with their own actions; and being resolved not to reform, partly for the peace of their own minds, and partly to vindicate themselves to others, they declare war against these principles; and if they can overthrow them, they gain a double advantage by it. They think they shall be at more ease in their own minds, if they can but free themselves from the check and control of these principles; and indeed they would be so, if they could root them out: but nature hath planted them so deep, and riveted them so fast, that when we have done all we can to extirpate them, they will spring up again. And then they hope also by this means to vindicate themselves to others, because they can now no longer be upbraided with
the

SERM. the disagreement of their principles with their
CCXLVI. practice.

3. There are others, who though they be not atheists themselves, yet from the spirit and interest of a worldly church, are concerned to promote atheism in others. And this hath been a very common practice of the factors for the church of Rome in this age: when they cannot gain men directly to their religion, they fetch a strange compass, and try to make them infidels or sceptics, as to all religion; and then they doubt not to bring them about at last to the outward profession of their religion, which will serve their turn well enough: for when men are once unhinged from the principles of all religion, 'tis no hard matter for their own ease and interest to persuade them to an outward compliance with that religion which is coming in fashion, and will bring them some advantage. And this is not an uncharitable suspicion, but certain in fact and experience; that this impious method of several of the priests of the church of Rome, hath been one of the principal sources of the infidelity and scepticism of this age.

II. This is a great vindication of our religion, that it can bear the light, and is ready to submit itself to any impartial trial and examination: we are not afraid to expose our religion to the public view of the world, and to appeal to the judgment of mankind for the truth and reasonableness of it: truth loves to come abroad and be seen, being confident of her own native beauty and charms, of her own force and power to gain upon the minds of men: and on the contrary, it doth justly draw a great suspicion upon any religion, if it decline the light;

light ; and nothing can render it more suspected, than S E R M. CCXLVI.
for the teachers of it to make it their great care
to keep people in the dark about it ; or if they
chance to peep into it, and to espy the defects of it,
to awe them by the extremity of danger and suf-
fering, from declaring against those errors and cor-
ruptions which they have discovered in it. I do
not know two worse signs of the falshood and cor-
ruption of any church or religion, than ignorance
and an inquisition ; these two are shrewder marks
of a false church, than all the fifteen marks which
Bellarmine hath mustered up are, to prove the church
of Rome to be the only true christian church. Me-
thinks their church and ours differ like Egypt and
Goshen, in the time of the plague of darkness ; only
in this they differ from Egypt, that God sent the
plague among them, but the church of Rome af-
fects it, and brings it upon themselves ; a darkness
so gross that “ it may be felt ;” and to make it more
thick and palpable, they impose upon men the be-
lief of direct nonsense, under the grave venerable
pretence of mystery, as in their doctrine of transub-
stantiation. And the great design of the inquisition,
is to awe men from reading the scriptures, and from
searching into, and examining the grounds of their
religion, because they think they will not bear the
test. “ This is the condemnation of that church, that
“ when light is come into the world, they love
“ darkness rather than light, because their doctrines
“ and their deeds are evil.”

III. And lastly, this gives us the plain reason
why some in the world are so careful to suppress
and conceal the truth, and to lock up the know-
ledge

SERM. ledge of it from the people in an unknown tongue,
 CCXLVI. and do so jealously guard all the avenues, whereby
 light and knowledge should enter into them, because their doctrines, and designs, "and deeds are
 "evil," and they are afraid they should be discovered to be so. This is the true reason why "they
 "love darkness rather than light;" for the church of Rome are wise enough in their generation, to understand that nothing but the darkness of their shops, can hinder people from discerning the falseness of their wares; they have several things to put off to the people, which cannot bear the trial of a clear and full light. What else makes them conceal the word of God from men? that great light which God hath set up in the world, to be "a
 "lamp to our feet, and a lantern to our steps;" it is not to keep out heresy, but light and truth: when they cannot be ignorant that God has set up this candle on purpose "to enlighten the world," why do they "put it under a bushel?" but that they are guilty to themselves, that several of their doctrines and practices will be discovered and re-
 proved by it.

What makes them in the face of the world to conceal from the people the second commandment in their ordinary catechisms and manuals, but lest the people should come to understand that God had expressly forbidden the worship of images? we do not conceal those texts, "feed my sheep," and "upon
 "this rock will I build my church;" for fear the people should discern the pope's supremacy and infallibility in them, but are content to run the hazard of it, and let them find them there if they can.

And

And then why do they mask the public service of SERM.
God, and the prayers and devotions of the people in CCXLVI.
an unknown tongue, but that they are afraid they
should understand the gross superstitions and idolatry
of many of them. If they mean honestly, why do
they cast such a mist about their religion? why do
they wrap and cover it all over in darkness, but that
they are heartily afraid, that the more people under-
stand it, the worse they will like it?

The truth is, their doctrines are evil, and their
deeds are evil, and plainly condemned almost in every
page of the bible; and therefore it is a dangerous
book to be suffered in the hands of the people; and
there is hardly any thing which the church of Rome
contends against, with more stiffness and zeal, than
letting the people have the service of God, and
the holy scriptures in a known tongue. When the
office of the mass was not many years since, by
some bishops and others in France, translated into
the vulgar tongue, for the benefit of the people,
how did the then pope Alexander the VIIth thunder
against them for it, calling them that did it, "sons
of perdition," and condemning the thing as if it
had been the wickedest thing in the world, and had
directly tended to the overthrow of the christian re-
ligion?

And then for the use of the holy scriptures in the
vulgar tongue, they have put that under so many
locks and keys, that the greatest caution in the
world is used in the permission and allowance of it
to any particular person; the priest hath not power
to do it, it is only the bishops that can grant this
liberty; and they do it very rarely, and only to
those of whom they are very secure; and this power

SERM. since that time again revoked; so that the gospel,
 CCXLVI. which before our SAVIOUR's appearance was "a
 "mystery, hid from ages and generations," continues
 so still to the common people of the church of Rome,
 and is under a thicker veil, more muffled and hid
 from the people, in an unknown tongue, than it was
 to the Jews, under the obscure prophecies and dark
 types and shadows of the old testament. So that
 though CHRIST "be read in their churches every
 "day," as Moses was to the "Jews in their syna-
 "gogues," yet he hath "a veil upon his face as
 "Moses had." "Wo unto you Scribes and Pha-
 "risees, hypocrites, for ye shut the kingdom of
 "heaven against men, and neither enter in your-
 "selves, nor suffer those that would enter, to go in."
 The people of the church of Rome are indeed to be
 pitied, who are kept in ignorance against their wills;
 but the governing part of that church are without
 excuse, who can cover their errors and corruptions,
 hide the scriptures from the people, "love darkness
 "rather than light;" this therefore is their great
 condemnation.

Witness the black and hellish design of this day*,
 such as never before entered into the heart of man,
 to have ruined a whole kingdom at once, in its
 prince and representative; and by a cruel sudden
 blow, to have taken away the lives of the greatest
 and most considerable assembly in the world. They
 must needs "love darkness and hate the light," who
 have such designs to carry on, and such deeds of
 darkness to justify and make good; they had need
 to suppress, and if possibly they can, to extinguish,
 not only that revealed truth of God, but even the
 great

* Preached Nov. 5, 1684.

great principles of natural religion, the belief of a SERM.
God, and a judgment to come, that attempt such CCXLVI.
things.

Time was, when in despite of the clearest evidence in the world, they did confidently deny that any such design was laid by those of their religion, but that it was a contrivance of some minister of state, who drew in a few rash and hot-headed persons of desperate fortunes into it, and then betrayed and discovered them : but when the late popish plot broke out here, then they were contented to own the gun-powder-treason, because they that were executed for it, did confess it, that they might with a better colour bring themselves off from this, which was so constantly denied by those who were condemned and executed for it ; but this was but a shift, and artifice to blind the clear evidence of this latter conspiracy, which pressed so hard upon them : and since that, because they are afraid it is still believed, they have used all imaginable arts, and taken a great deal of pains to wash this black-a-moor ; yet the negro is a negro still, and I doubt not, but they are still at work carrying on the same design, which if God do not mercifully frustrate and disappoint, is like at last to involve this nation in great misery and confusion.

“ But the LORD reigneth ; therefore let the earth
“ rejoice, and the multitude of the isles be glad
“ thereof. He that sitteth in the heavens laughs
“ at them, the LORD shall have them in derision.”
There are many plots and “ devices in the heart
“ of man : but the counsel of the LORD that shall
“ stand.” And if we would but live to the light
which we enjoy, and adorn our reformed religion

by an holy and unblameable conversation; if we would avoid those bloody and rebellious ways, which are so natural, and suitable to their religion, and so contrary to ours, and so scandalous to all religion; if we would break off our sins by repentance, and put an end to our foolish differences and divisions, by returning to the ancient peace and unity of this once happy and firmly compacted church, we have no reason yet to despair, but that God would “ return “ to us in mercy and loving-kindness, and think “ thoughts of peace towards us,” and preserve the best religion in the world to us, and our posterity after us.

“ Now unto him that hath delivered us so often, “ and so wonderfully, and doth deliver us, and we “ trust will still deliver us, to him be honour and “ glory, praise and thanksgiving, for ever and ever. “ Amen.”

S E R M O N CCXLVII.

True liberty, the result of christianity.

JOHN viii. 36.

If the son therefore shall make you free, ye shall be free indeed.

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THE meaning of these words will best appear, by considering the occasion of them, which was this. Upon our SAVIOUR's preaching to the Jews, many believed on him;

him; whereupon he tells them that “ if they continued in his doctrine,” did not only yield a present assent, but firmly embraced it, and framed their life and practice according to it, then “ they would be his disciples indeed, and they should know the truth;” they would come by degrees to a more perfect knowledge and understanding of it, “ and the truth would make them free.” At this expression of “ being made free,” they were somewhat offended; because they took themselves to be the freest people in the world: and by virtue of God’s covenant with Abraham, from whom they were descended, to have many privileges and immunities conferred upon them, above the rest of mankind: ver. 33. “ They answered him, we be Abraham’s seed, and were never in bondage to any man: how sayest thou, ye shall be made free?” They took this for a great affront to them, and an insinuation that they were in slavery and bondage. But they mistook our SAVIOUR, who did not speak of an outward and civil servitude; and yet, if their pride and conceit of themselves would have suffered them to consider it, it was true likewise in that sense, that they lost their liberty, being at that time in great bondage and subjection to the Romans. But that was not the thing our SAVIOUR meant; he spake of a spiritual servitude, which if men were truly sensible of, is far more grievous than that of the body, and the outward man: ver. 34, 35. “ JESUS answered them, verily, verily I say unto you, whosoever committeth sin, is the servant of sin. And the servant abideth not in the house for ever; but the Son abideth ever;” that is, a servant hath no right to any thing, but is perfectly at

SERM. the disposal of his master, being a part of his goods,
 CCXLVII. which he may use as he pleaseth; but the SON
 hath a right to the inheritance, and is as it were lord
 of the estate: and then it follows, “ if the SON
 “ therefore shall make you free, ye shall be free
 “ indeed.”

In which words our SAVIOUR seems to allude to a custom which was in some of the cities of Greece, and perhaps in other places, whereby the SON and heir had a power to adopt brethren, and to give them the liberty and privilege of the family. If the SON of GOD set you free from this spiritual slavery, and adopt you to be his brethren, “ then are you free indeed;” not only in a vain opinion and conceit, as you take yourselves to be by virtue of being Abraham’s children, but really and in truth, ye shall be asserted to a truer and more excellent kind of liberty, than that which ye value yourselves so much upon by virtue of being Abraham’s seed. “ Then shall ye be free indeed.”

So that our SAVIOUR’s meaning is plainly this; that the doctrine of the christian religion, which the SON of GOD came to preach to the world, heartily embraced, does assert men to the truest and most perfect kind of liberty. I know this is but a metaphor whereby the benefits and advantages which the doctrine of GOD our SAVIOUR hath brought to mankind, are expressed and set forth to us; but it is a very easy and fit metaphor, and does convey the thing intended very fully to our minds, and hath a great deal of truth and reality under it. And to the end we may understand it the better, I shall do these two things:

First,

First, observe to you in the general, that the SPIRIT of GOD, in the holy scriptures, delights very much to set forth to us the benefits and advantages of the christian religion, by metaphors taken from such things as are most pleasant and desirable to men. SERM. CCXLVII.

Secondly, I shall shew particularly in what respects the SON of GOD by his doctrine makes us free. For when "the SON is said to make us free," we are to understand that it is by his doctrine; for that our SAVIOUR had expressly said before, "ye shall know the truth, and the truth shall make you free."

First, I shall observe to you in the general, that the SPIRIT of GOD, in the holy scriptures, delights very much to set forth to us the benefits and advantages of the christian religion, by metaphors taken from such things as are most pleasant and desirable to men; more especially by these three, of "light, life, and liberty," than which nothing can be named that is more delightful and valuable to men.

By "light;" of which Solomon says, that "it is sweet, and a pleasant thing for the eyes to behold the sun." Hence our SAVIOUR is called "the sun of righteousness," Mal. iv. 2. and "the light of the world." And ver. 12. of this chapter, "I am the light of the world; he that followeth me, shall not walk in darkness." And chap. i. 9. he is called "the true light," "that was the true light, which lighteth every man that cometh into the world;" or, as the words should rather be translated, "which coming into the world, lighteth every man." He is said "to give light to them

SERM. "that sit in darkness, and in the shadow of death,"
 CCXLVII. Luke vii. 79. "To be a light to lighten the na-
 "tions," Luke ii. 32. And the doctrine which he
 preached is called "a light," John iii. 19. "This
 "is the condemnation, that light is come into the
 "world, and men loved darkness rather than light."
 And 2 Cor. iv. 6. the gospel is called "the light of
 "the knowledge of the glory of God, in the face
 "of JESUS CHRIST."

So likewise by the metaphor of life; which is that
 which men value above all other things, John xi.
 25. "I am the resurrection and the life." And
 John xiv. 6. "I am the way, the truth, and the
 "life." And because bread is the chief support of
 life, our SAVIOUR is likewise set forth to us under
 that notion, John vi. 32. "For the bread of God
 "is he which cometh down from heaven, and giveth
 "life unto the world." And we are said "to have
 "life through his name," John xx. 31. "But these
 "are written, that ye might believe that JESUS is
 "the CHRIST, the SON of GOD, and that believing,
 "ye might have life through his name." And the
 doctrine of the gospel is likewise called "the word
 of life," Phil. ii. 26.

And to come to my present purpose, the benefits
 and advantages of the gospel are frequently repre-
 sented to us under the notion of liberty, and redemp-
 tion from slavery and bondage, which among men
 is valued next to life itself. Hence are those titles
 given to our SAVIOUR, of a redeemer, and deli-
 verer; and he is said to have "obtained eternal re-
 "demption for us," Heb. ix. 12. He is said "to
 "have given himself for us, that he might redeem
 "us from all iniquity," Tit. ii. 14. And the pub-
 lishing

lishing of the gospel is compared to the proclaiming SERM.
CCXLVII.
of the year of jubilee among the Jews, wherein all persons were set at liberty, Isa. lxi. 1, 2. “ The
“ SPIRIT of the LORD GOD is upon me, because
“ the LORD hath anointed me to preach good tidings
“ unto the meek, he hath sent me to bind up the
“ broken hearted, to proclaim liberty to the cap-
“ tives, and the opening of the prison to them that
“ are bound ; to proclaim the acceptable year of
“ the LORD.” Upon this account likewise the go-
spel is called by St. James, “ the royal law, and
“ the perfect law of liberty,” James i. 25.

Thus you see that this is one of the principal metaphors whereby the scripture sets forth to us the advantages of the christian doctrine ; and that it is not seldom and casually used, but frequently, and upon design, as that which most fitly represents to us the benefits we have by the gospel.

Secondly, I shall now in the next place shew more particularly, in what respects the SON of GOD by his doctrine, may be said to make us free. And that in these two respects :

I. As it frees us from the bondage of ignorance, and error, and prejudice.

II. From the slavery of our lusts and passions.

I. It frees us from the bondage of ignorance, and error, and prejudice, which is a more inveterate and obstinate error. And this is a great bondage to the mind of man, to live in ignorance of those things which are useful for us to know, to be mistaken about those matters which are of great moment and concernment to us to be rightly informed in : ignorance is the confinement of our understandings, as knowledge and right apprehensions of
5 things

SERM. things are a kind of liberty and enlargement to the
 CCXLVII. mind of man. Under this slavery the world groaned,
 and were bound in these chains of darkness for many
 years, till the light of the glorious gospel broke in
 upon the world, and our blessed SAVIOUR, who is
 truth, came to set us free.

As for the heathen part of the world, the generality of them lived in gross ignorance of God, and pernicious mistakes concerning him. So the apostle tells us, Rom. i. 21. that "they were vain in their
 " imaginations, and their foolish heart was dark-
 " ned:" and Eph. iv. 17, 18. that "they walk
 " in the vanity of their mind, having the under-
 " standing darkened, being alienated from the life
 " of God, through the ignorance that is in them,
 " because of the blindness of their heart." They had gross, and unworthy, and false apprehensions concerning the nature of God, by which they were misled into horrible superstitions, and abominable idolatries: and in conformity to the false notions which they had of their deities, and an imitation of their fabulous stories concerning them, they were guilty of all manner of lewdness and vice; so that through their mistakes of God, they were altogether estranged from that virtuous, and holy, and divine life, which men ought to lead: and considering what apprehensions they had of God, many of their superstitions and vices were almost unavoidable. And by this advantage of the ignorance that mankind was sunk into, the devil did chiefly maintain and keep up his kingdom; it being next to impossible for men amidst so much darkness to see the right way and walk in it. It was easy for him, when he had thus enslaved their understandings, and blind-
 ed

ed their eyes, "to lead them captive at his pleasure."
"fure."

SERM.
CCXLVII.

Yea, the Jews themselves, though they enjoyed many degrees of light beyond the rest of the world, and had the advantage of frequent revelations, yet this was but darkness in comparison of those clear discoveries which are made to mankind by the gospel; by which many things are revealed to us, which were "hid from ages and generations;" and one of the most important truths, and of greatest efficacy upon the minds of men, is brought to light, viz. the certainty of a future state, and the rewards of it. This the apostle tells us is "made manifest by the appearing of our SAVIOUR JESUS CHRIST," who hath abolished death, and "brought life and immortality to light through the gospel, 2 Tim. i. 10. Under the dispensation of the law, the Jews had very imperfect notions concerning the divine nature, and the best and most acceptable way of worshipping God, which they thought to consist in external rites, and carnal observances, in washing of the body, and in sacrifices of lambs, and goats, and other creatures; for which reason, the law is frequently represented in the new testament, as a state of bondage and restraint. It is called "a yoke, which neither they nor their fathers were able to bear;" a school-master which kept men under a severe awe and discipline. It is represented as a prison, and a condition of restraint, Gal. iii. 23. "Before faith came," that is, before the gospel was revealed, "we were kept under the law, shut up." Upon the same account the temper and disposition of men under that dispensation, is called "a spirit of bondage; ye have not received the spirit of
"bondage

SERM. “bondage again to fear,” Rom. viii. 15. that is, ye
 are not still under the law. And, on the contrary, the gospel is represented as a state of liberty and adoption, whereby men are freed from the bondage they were in under the law : so that there was great need in reference to the Jews, as well as the heathen world, of a clearer light, and more perfect revelation, to free the minds of men from the servitude of ignorance and error.

And this was a bondage indeed, worse than that of Egypt or Babylon, because they were in love with this slavery, and fond of their fetters ; and when “light came into the world, they loved darkness rather than light.” So that it was one of the hardest things in the world to convince them of their ignorance, and to make them patient of instruction, and willing to be set free from those violent and unreasonable prejudices against our SAVIOUR and his doctrine, which they were possessed withal ; in-
 so-much that the apostles found it an easier work to gain the heathen world, than the Jews. For though the Heathens had less knowledge, yet their pride and prejudice was not so great ; they were in a thicker darkness than the Jews, but when the light came, they were more willing to entertain it, and did not shut their eyes so wilfully against it ; when the prison-doors were open they were glad to come out, and accept of liberty : but the Jews were so obstinately fixed in their prejudice, that they would not let “the truth set them free.” When this jubilee, this “acceptable year of the LORD was proclaimed,” they refused the benefit of it ; and like those who were of a servile disposition among them, they were contented to have “their ears bor’d through, and to be servants for ever.”

But

But yet it was a great liberty which the gospel offered to them, had they been sensible of it. For SERM.
CCXLVII.
how easy is the mind of man, when it finds itself freed from those errors and prejudices which it sees others labour under? And how does it rejoice in this liberty? Certainly one of the greatest pleasures of human nature is the discovery of truth, yea even in curious speculations, which are of no great concernment to us. How was Archimedes transported upon a mathematical discovery, so that he thought no sacrifice too great to offer to the gods by way of acknowledgment? But surely the pleasure is justly greater in matters of so great moment and consequence to our happiness. The light of the sun is not more grateful to our outward sense, than the light of truth is to the soul. By ignorance, and error, and prejudice, the mind of man is fettered and entangled, so that it hath not the free use of itself: but when we are rightly informed, especially in those things which are useful and necessary for us to know, we recover our liberty, and feel ourselves enlarged from the restraints we were in before. And this effect the saving truths of the gospel have upon the minds of men, above any discoveries that ever were made to the world. Christianity hath set the world free from those chains of darkness and ignorance it was bound withal, and from the most dangerous and pernicious errors, and that in matters of greatest consequence and importance. This is the first kind of freedom, which we have by the doctrine of the gospel, freedom from the bondage of ignorance, error and prejudice, in matters of greatest moment and importance to our happiness. And though this liberty be highly to be valued; yet the other
which

SERM. which I am going to speak to, is more considerable;
 CCXLVII. and that is,

II. Freedom from the slavery of our passions and lusts, from the tyranny of vicious habits and practices. And this which is the saddest and worst kind of bondage, the doctrine of the gospel is a most proper and powerful means to free us from; and this is that which I suppose is principally intended by our SAVIOUR. For when the Jews told him that they did not stand in need of any liberty, that "they were Abraham's seed, and were never in bondage to any," our SAVIOUR declares what kind of bondage and slavery he meant; "he that committeth sin, is the servant of sin." Wickedness and vice is the bondage of the will, which is the proper seat of liberty; and therefore there is no such slave in the world, as a man that is subject to his lusts; that is under the tyranny of strong and unruly passions, of vicious inclinations and habits. This man is a slave to many masters, who are very imperious and exacting; and the more he yieldeth to them, with the greater tyranny and rigour they will use him. One passion hurries a man one way, and another drives him fiercely another; one lust commands him upon such a service, and another calls him off to another work; so that a man under the command and authority of his lusts and passions, is like the Centurion's servants, when "they say to him come, he must come," and when "they say go, he must go;" when they say "do this, he must do it;" because he is in subjection to them.

How does a man lose the power over himself by any inordinate passions? how do anger and revenge hurry a man into rash and mischievous actions which
 he

he repents of commonly as soon as they are done? SERM.
CCXLVII.
how do malice and envy torment the mind, and keep it in continual labour and uneasiness? what a slave and drudge is he, who is possessed with any inordinate love for the world, and desire of riches? how does the tyranny of ambition thrust men upon dangers, and torment them with disappointment? what a bondage is it to be under the slavish fear of death? and how does every lust and vicious habit domineer over a man? so that though he desire, and many times resolve to do otherwise, yet is not able to assert his own liberty, and resist the weakest temptations when they come in his way.

And that which makes their condition the worse, is, that every man is wholly at first, and afterwards in some degree consenting to his own bondage. In other cases most men are made slaves against their wills, by the force and power of others: but the wicked man chooseth this condition, and voluntarily submits himself to it. There are very few to be found in the world, that are so stupid and senseless, so sick of their liberty, and so weary of their happiness, as to put themselves into this condition: but the wicked sells himself to do wickedly, and parts with that liberty which he may keep, and if he would resolve to do it, and beg God's grace to that purpose, none could take it from him.

And, which is an aggravation of his servile condition, he makes himself a slave to his own servants, to those that were born to be subject to him, his own appetites, and inclinations, and passions. So that this is the worst kind of slavery, so much worse than that of the mines and galleys, as the soul and spirit of a man is more noble and excellent than his body.

Now

SERM.

CCXLVII.

Now the doctrine of the gospel is the most proper and effectual means in the world to free us from this servitude; by presenting us with motives and arguments to rescue ourselves from this slavery, and conferring upon us strength and assistance to that end. The doctrine of our SAVIOUR represents to us all those considerations, which may convince us of the miserable bondage of those who are under the power and dominion of sin; and of the fatal inconvenience of continuing in that state; that “the end of these things” will be death: and to encourage us to vindicate our own liberty, offers us the grace and assistance of GOD’S HOLY SPIRIT, to help our weakness, and to strengthen our holy resolutions, and to carry us through those difficulties, which of ourselves we are not able to conquer. The SON of GOD stands by us in this conflict, and “the SPIRIT of him that raised up JESUS from the dead.” works in us; and if we would make use of this strength which is offered to us, we may “break these bonds in sunder, and “cast these cords from us: for greater is he that “is in us, than he that is in the world;” the SPIRIT of GOD is stronger than “that SPIRIT which “works in the children of disobedience.” So that there is nothing wanting to set us at liberty, but the resolution of our own wills. If we will quit ourselves like men, the power of GOD and his grace is ready to take our part against all our enemies. “The SON of GOD was manifest for this end, to “take away sin, and to destroy the works of the “devil; to redeem us from all iniquity, and to deliver us from the powers of darkness:” and why should we despair of victory and success, when, “the
“cap-

“captain of our salvation, who hath led captivity captive,” leads us on, and as an encouragement to us, shews us his own triumphs and conquests which he hath made over sin and hell? Are we enslaved to the world, and the lusts of it? He hath “overcome the world;” and by faith we may overcome it; that is, by a firm belief and persuasion of those things which he hath revealed to us; “for this is the victory that overcometh the world, even our faith.” Does the fear of sufferings, and persecution, and death, keep us in bondage? The SON of GOD hath rescued us from this fear, by setting before us the glorious hopes of an eternal life. For nothing makes men afraid of death, but the want of assurance of another life, and of the happiness of it: but this our SAVIOUR hath “brought to light by the gospel.” By his own death and resurrection he hath given us perfect assurance of life after death, and a blessed immortality. And this, the apostle tells us, was one great reason why the SON of GOD took our mortal nature upon him, that he might conquer death for us, and free us from the slavish fear of it, Heb. ii. 14, 15. “Forasmuch then as the children are partakers of flesh and blood, he also himself likewise took part of the same, that through death he might destroy him that had the power of death, that is, the devil; and deliver them, who through fear of death were all their life-time subject to bondage.” The inferences from this discourse, shall be these two.

First, to shew us what that liberty is which the SON of GOD confers upon us. It is not a liberty to sin; for that our SAVIOUR tells us, is a state

S E R M. of slavery and bondage ; “ he that committeth sin,
 CCXLVII. “ is the servant of sin.” This use indeed some made
 of the christian doctrine, to encourage themselves in
 sin, under the pretence of christian liberty, and that
 in the apostles days. So St. Peter tells us, 2 Epist.
 ii. 19. “ While they promise them liberty, they
 “ themselves are the servants of corruption,” and in
 bondage to their lusts. But nothing can be more
 directly contrary to the great design and intention of
 the gospel, which indeed promises and declares li-
 berty ; but not from the laws of God, and the
 obligation of our duty, but as the apostle calls it,
 from “ the law of sin and death.” Christian li-
 berty does not consist in being free from our duty,
 but in doing those things which really tend to our
 perfection and happiness, in being “ free from sin,
 “ and becoming the servants of God.” This is the
 proper use and exercise of our liberty, to do what we
 ought, to live according to reason, and the laws of
 God, which are “ holy, just, and good.” The
 freedom which the Son of God designed, was our
 being rescued from the bondage of sin and corrup-
 tion, of the devil and our own lusts, “ that being
 “ delivered from the hands of these enemies, we might
 “ serve God without fear, in holiness and righteous-
 “ ness before him all the days of our lives.”

Secondly, to persuade us to assert our liberty, “ and
 “ stand fast in it.” The Son of God hath done that
 which is sufficient on his part to vindicate mankind
 from the slavery of their lusts and passions : and if
 we will vigourously set about the work, and put forth
 our endeavours, we may rescue ourselves from this
 bondage. And because it must be acknowledged that
 this

this is no easy work, therefore by way of direction S E R M.
and encouragement, I would commend to men these CCXLVII.
following particulars :

1. To consider seriously the misery and danger of this condition, and the necessity of freeing ourselves from this slavery. I have shewn that it is the worst kind of bondage, and it hath the saddest consequences. Some service, though it be hard and grievous, yet men are content to endure it, because it may prove beneficial to them, and is in order to a greater freedom ; but the service of sin is altogether unprofitable. “ What fruit had ye then, says the apostle, of those “ things whereof ye are now ashamed ? for the end “ of those things is death. The wages of sin is “ death.” All the reward that shall be given us for this service, is misery and punishment, “ indig- “ nation and wrath, tribulation and anguish, to “ every soul that doth evil.” So that it is necessary that we should shake off this yoke, as we desire to escape the chains of darkness, and the unspeakable and insupportable misery of another world. He that now makes us his slaves to do his work, will torment us for the doing of it to all eternity.

2. Seeing this condition is so insupportable, and the consequences of it so dreadful, let us take up a firm and manly resolution to free ourselves from this slavery. It is no easy matter to break off a vicious habit, which we have been long accustomed to ; nay perhaps it is one of the most difficult things that human nature can attempt, and therefore it requires great firmness of mind, and strength of resolution. It is next to the going against nature, and the conquering of that ; for custom is a sort of nature,

SERM. and every habit is a bowing of nature a certain way,
 CCXLVII. and when nature hath once long stood bent one way,
 it is hard to restore it to its former condition; and
 nothing but a great resolution, taken up upon a full
 conviction of the necessity of the thing, will carry us
 through.

3. For the encouragement of this resolution, consider what assistance God hath promised us. Indeed when we consider the difficulty of the thing; and the weakness and unsteadfastness of our own minds, how apt we are to give over when we meet with great opposition and resistance, we might justly be discouraged in our attempts, if we had nothing but our own strength to trust to: but God hath promised to stand by us, and second us in this conflict; and if he be for us, what can stand against us? There is nothing too hard for a stout resolution backed by the grace of God.

4. That we may not be discouraged by an apprehension of too much difficulty in the thing, consider that the main difficulty is at first. So soon as we have resolutely begun, the work is half done; if we can but sustain the first brunt, the enemy will give ground apace; every day we shall get more strength, and the habits of sin will be weakened. In all cases there is difficulty in breaking off a habit, and doing contrary to what we have been used and accustomed to do: but after we have practised the contrary a while, it will every day grow more easy and pleasant; for custom will make any thing so.

5. Consider that the longer we continue in this state, the harder we shall find it to rescue ourselves from it; for sin will every day get more strength,
 and

and we shall have less; for vice is so far from being mortified by age, that by every day's continuing in it, we increase the power of it; and so much strength as any one adds to his disease, he takes from himself. And this is a double weakening of us, when we do not only lose our strength, but the enemy gets it, and will employ it against us. Therefore let us presently set about this work, "to day, while it is called to day, lest we be hardened through the deceitfulness of sin." The longer we continue in sin, the farther God withdraws his grace from us; and not only so, but the devil gets a greater dominion over us, and a firmer possession of us, till by degrees we do insensibly slide into that state, in which, without the miraculous grace of God, we are like for ever to continue. "Can the Ethiopian change his skin, or the leopard his spots? Then may ye also do good, that are accustomed to do evil." It is next to a natural impossibility for a man to rescue himself out of this state.

6. And lastly, be not discouraged, though ye do not meet with that success at first, which ye expected and hoped for; though after several attempts to recover your liberty, ye be foiled and cast back. It sometimes so happens that some are by a mighty resolution, and very extraordinary and overpowering degree of God's grace, reclaimed from a wicked life at once: but in the ordinary methods of God's grace, evil habits are mastered and subdued by degrees; and tho' we be resolved upon a better course, and entered upon it, yet the inclinations to our former course will frequently return upon us, and may sometimes too prevail. And we are not to think this strange, 'tis nothing but what is natural, and may

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reasonably be expected. It is no just ground of discouragement to us, if after we have engaged in a good course, we be sometimes pulled back again, and the habits which we are breaking off from, gather strength, and make head again; as an enemy after he is routed, and hath begun to fly, does frequently rally, and make as if he would renew the fight again, and may perhaps prevail in a little skirmish: but for all this we are nevertheless in a fair way to victory, if we will pursue our first advantage, and prosecute it vigorously. Nay, this should be so far from discouraging us, that it should make us resume new courage, that we may not lose what we have got.

I the rather mention this, because many miscarry upon this account, and many good resolutions and attempts to vindicate our liberty from the bondage of corruption, are given over and come to nothing, because men make false accounts of things, and expect to conquer, and get a compleat victory at first: and indeed they are taught by those who are not well skilled in this spiritual warfare, that this work is done in an instant, and the habits of grace and virtue are infused into men at once; and if men give back, all they had done is lost, and that they are in a worse condition, than if they had never begun: whereas usually it is quite otherwise, and the habits of goodness are acquired, as other habits are by slow degrees at first, and with a great deal of conflict; and it is a good while before a man comes to that confirmed state, that he may be said “to have conquered;” but if he persists in his resolutions, and when he hath received some foil, take heart again, he is in the way to victory; and though
he

he be not in a perfect state of acceptance with God, SERM.
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yet his endeavours have the acceptance of good beginnings, and he hath no reason to be discouraged at what he had reason to expect when he began this work, if he calculate things aright: and they that tell men otherwise, have taken up false notions in divinity, but do not consult human nature, and the usual progress of God's grace in the conversion of a sinner, and reclaiming him from a wicked course, and have not taken sufficient care to reconcile their notions of divinity, with the nature of things, and the certain and undoubted experience of mankind. Therefore let no man be faint and discouraged upon this account, and think the thing is not to be done, because he does not meet with perfect success at first; for this seldom happens, and therefore ought not to be expected: but let him still go on and reinforce his resolutions; and the opposition and difficulty will abate, and the work continually grow easier upon his hand, and "the God of peace will at last tread down Satan under his feet."

S E R M O N CCXLVIII.

The duty of improving the present
opportunity and advantages of
the gospel.

J O H N xii. 35.

*Then said JESUS unto them, yet a little while is the
light with you; walk while ye have the light, lest
darkness come upon you.*

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Preached
Feb. 15.
1685.

THEN said JESUS unto them," that is,
upon the discourse he had just before had
with them, concerning his approaching
death, and departure out of this world; at the mention
whereof, they were offended and troubled; but in-
stead of that, our SAVIOUR puts them upon that
which would be of real use and benefit to them,
to improve those advantages and opportunities which
they were like to enjoy but a little while; " then
" said JESUS unto them, yet a little while is the
" light with you; walk while ye have the light, lest
" darkness come upon you; for he that walketh in
" darkness, knoweth not whither he goeth."

" Yet a little while is the light with you." This
our SAVIOUR speaks of himself, and his personal pre-
sence and teaching among them; " yet a little while
" is the light with you:" for so he frequently calls
himself and his doctrine. John iii. 19. " Light is
" come into the world." John viii. 12. " I am
" the

“ the light of the world : he that followeth me, shall
“ not walk in darkness, but shall have the light
“ of life ;” that is, such a light as will direct him
in the way to eternal life ; and John ix. 5. “ As
“ long as I am in the world, I am the light of the
“ world.”

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“ Walk while ye have the light.” Light is the
opportunity of action, and going about our business,
and therefore it is joined with walking and work-
ing, as in the text I mentioned before, “ I am the
“ light of the world, he that followeth me shall not
“ walk in darkness.” And John ix. 4. where the
continuance of this opportunity of light is called the
day, and the ceasing or withdrawing of it, the night.
“ I must work the works of him that sent me, says
“ our LORD, while it is day : the night cometh,
“ when no man can work.” Therefore we should
walk and work while we have the light.

“ Left darkness come upon you.” And this will
be a dismal and fatal time, when all opportunity of
walking and working will be at an end ; for when
the light hath left us, we shall not be able to see
what to do, or whither to go, as our SAVIOUR adds
to enforce his exhortation of making use of the pre-
sent advantages and opportunities. “ Walk while
“ ye have the light, lest darkness come upon you :
“ for he that walketh in darkness knoweth not whi-
“ ther he goeth.”

All this our SAVIOUR plainly speaks to the Jews,
with relation to his own personal presence and preach-
ing among them, which he tells them would shortly
cease, and be at an end. In which sense these words
do not concern us, but only the Jews at that time,

to

SERM. to whom they were spoken : but by an equality of
 CCXLVIII. reason, the advice here given by our SAVIOUR, first
 and immediately to the Jews, may be recommend-
 ed to us, in the general reason and intention of it ;
 to us I say, who, though we do not enjoy the light
 of CHRIST's personal presence, yet we have the light
 of his doctrine, and the power and presence of his
 SPIRIT going along with it, and supplying the ab-
 sence of his person ; so that in effect we have all the
 advantages and means of salvation, which the Jews
 had ; and we know not how long they may be con-
 tinued, or how soon they may be taken from us ;
 and therefore the general reason and intendment of
 this advice concerns us equally with the Jews, and
 considering the uncertainty of the continuance of the
 means and opportunities of salvation, either to a par-
 ticular people or person, we may very well apply
 these words of our SAVIOUR to ourselves, and as if
 they had been spoken by him to us as well as to
 the Jews ; “ yet a little while is the light with you ;
 “ walk while ye have the light, lest darkness come
 “ upon you ; for he that walketh in darkness know-
 “ eth not whither he goeth.”

Abstracting then from the particular occasion and
 meaning of the words, I shall prosecute the general
 reason and intention of them, as it may be accommo-
 dated to us, and that in these following particulars :

First, as we have the like means and opportunities
 of grace and salvation, as the Jews had.

Secondly, in that the season of their continuance is
 uncertain to us, as well as it was to them ; we know
 not how long they may be continued, nor how soon
 they may be taken from us.

Thirdly,

Thirdly, in that the same duty and obligation lies S E R M.
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upon us, of improving the present advantages and opportunities which we enjoy. “Walk while ye have
“the light.”

Fourthly, in that we may justly apprehend the like danger, and dismal consequence of being deprived of these happy opportunities and advantages. “Left
“darkness come upon you; for he that walketh in
“darkness, knoweth not whither he goeth.”

Fifthly, I shall consider by what things God is more especially provoked, to deprive a people of the means and opportunities of grace and salvation.

And then, lastly, what is the way and means to prevent so dismal a judgment, and procure, if it may be, “a lengthening of our tranquillity.” I shall go over these particulars as briefly as I can.

First, that we have the like means and opportunities of grace and salvation, as the Jews had; not the very same in kind, and all the circumstances of them, as I noted before, but the same equivalently, and in substance, and to all the purposes of our eternal salvation and happiness, if we make a right use of them. The Jews had the personal presence and preaching of CHRIST among them; they did converse familiarly with him; “did eat and drink in
“his presence,” and heard him “teach in their
“streets;” which was a very valuable and signal privilege vouchsafed only to that people, and only in that age. For as to his personal presence and conversation, “he was not sent, but only to the lost
“sheep of the house of Israel.”

But we have still the same means and advantages in substance, which they had; “the gospel is
“preached to us, as well as to them;” we have all
the

SERM. the light and direction concerning our duty, and all
CCXLVIII. the encouragement to holiness and obedience, which
 they had ; and there is still the same inward operation and concurrence of GOD'S HOLY SPIRIT, accompanying his word, and making way for the entertainment of it ; if there be but the same obsequiousness of faith in us, and readiness to " receive the " truth in the love of it, that we may be saved."

Nay we have several advantages above them ; that the christian religion does not lie under those prejudices, in respect of us, which it did with them ; it hath been now for many ages received and established among us, and the prejudice of education is on its side ; and it hath had great and manifold confirmation given to it, since our SAVIOUR'S time, by the wonderful success and prevalency of it in the world, notwithstanding all the disadvantages it lay under, and the mighty opposition that was raised against it, by the remarkable fulfilling of many of our SAVIOUR'S predictions concerning the final destruction of the temple at Jerusalem, and the desolation of that city, and the dispersion of the Jewish nation over the world, and their being " hated of all nations," which hath now continued for above sixteen hundred years, and we see it at this day, as if the providence of God had ordered it on purpose, for a standing monument and testimony in all ages of the truth of the christian religion.

So that, blessed be God, there is no want of means, to bring us to the knowledge of the truth, " that we may be saved ;" no want of evidence to confirm to us the truth of this religion ; there is nothing on GOD'S part ; if there be any failure and defect, it is on ours, who will not " walk in the

" light

“ light while we have it ; nor know in this our day
“ the things which belong to our peace, before they
“ be hid from our eyes.”

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Secondly, the season of the continuance of these means of grace and salvation, which are afforded to us, is uncertain to us, as well as it was to them. We know not how long they may be vouchsafed to us, nor how soon they may be taken away from us. “ Yet a little while the light is with you,” saith our SAVIOUR to the Jews, meaning, that he himself should shortly be put to death, and removed from them. This is not just our case : but thus far it agrees, that the light of the gospel, and the blessed opportunities which thereby we enjoy, are of an uncertain continuance, and may be of a lesser or longer duration, as GOD pleaseth, and according as we make use of them, and demean ourselves under them, I remember there is a very odd passage in Mr. Herbert’s poems, which whether it be only the prudent conjecture and foresight of a wise man, or there be something more prophetic in it, I cannot tell ; it is this ;

*Religion stands on tiptoes in our land,
Ready to pass to the American strand
When Seine shall swallow Tiber, and the Thames
By letting in them both, pollute her streams,
Then shall religion to America flee ;
They have their times of gospel, even as we.*

The meaning of it is this, that when the vices of Italy shall pass into France, and the vices of both shall overspread England, then the gospel will leave these parts of the world, and pass into America, to visit those dark regions, which have so long
“ sat in darkness and the shadow of death.” And
this

SERM. this is not so improbable, if we consider, what vast
 CCXLVIII. colonies in this last age have been transplanted out
 of Europe into those parts, as it were on purpose to
 prepare and make way for such a change. But how-
 ever that be, considering how impiety and all man-
 ner of wickedness do reign among us, we have too
 much cause to apprehend, that if we do not reform
 and grow better, the providence of GOD will find
 some way or other to deprive us of that light, which
 is so abused and affronted by our wicked and lewd
 lives; and GOD seems now to say to us, as our LORD
 did to the Jews, “ Yet a little while is the light with
 “ you; walk while ye have the light, lest darkness
 “ come upon you.” I proceed to the

Third particular, that there is the same duty and
 obligation upon us, that was upon the Jews, of im-
 proving the present advantages and opportunities of
 salvation, which we enjoy; and our LORD says to us,
 as well as to them, “ Walk while ye have the light.”
 He expects from us, that we should make use of those
 blessed opportunities, and answer those manifold ad-
 vantages, which are afforded to us, above most nations
 of the world; that we should improve our knowledge
 in religion, and advance daily in the practice of it;
 that we should “ work while it is day,” and that
 the more light we have, the better our lives should
 be. For this is “ to walk in the light;” to make
 use of the present advantages and opportunities, and
 to be active and industrious “ to work out our own
 “ salvation; to be fruitful in every good word and
 “ work, and to abound in all the fruits of righteous-
 “ ness, which are by JESUS CHRIST to the glory
 “ and praise of God.” The apostle St. Peter tells
 us at large what obligation the knowledge of the
 gospel

gospel lays upon all christians, to make answerable SERM.
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improvement in all goodness and virtue, 2 Pet. i. 3,

4, 5, 6, 7, 8, 9, “ According as his divine power
“ hath given unto us all things that pertain unto
“ life and godliness, through the knowledge of him
“ that hath called us to glory and virtue ; where-
“ by are given unto us exceeding great and pre-
“ cious promises, that by these you might be par-
“ takers of the divine nature, having escaped the cor-
“ ruption that is in the world through lust. And
“ besides this, giving all diligence, add to your
“ faith, virtue ; and to virtue, knowledge ; and to
“ knowledge, temperance ; and to temperance, pa-
“ tience ; and to patience, godliness ; and to god-
“ liness, brotherly kindness ; and to brotherly kind-
“ nesses, charity. For if these things be in you,
“ and abound, they make you that ye shall neither
“ be barren, nor unfruitful in the knowledge of
“ our LORD JESUS CHRIST. But he that lacketh
“ these things is blind, and cannot see far off, and
“ hath forgotten that he was purged from his old
“ sins.” If the gospel have not this effect upon us ; if
we make no use of the light of it, we do not consider
that the proper effect of the christian religion, is to
purge men from those sins and vices which reigned
in them before ; and if it have not this effect upon
us, it had been better for us, to have been without
this light and knowledge. So the same apostle de-
clares, chap. ii. 21. “ For it had been better for
“ them not to have known the way of righteousness,
“ than after they have known it, to turn from the
“ holy commandment delivered unto them.” I pro-
ceed to the

Fourth

SERM. *CCXLVIII.* Fourth particular, that if we make no improvement of these happy advantages and opportunities, we may justly apprehend the like danger and dismal consequences, of being deprived of them. “Walk
 “ while ye have the light, lest darkness come upon
 “ you: for he that walketh in darkness, knoweth
 “ not whither he goeth.” GOD’s dealing with the
 Jews, upon this provocation, was very terrible, and,
 as the apostle saith upon another occasion, “it
 “ serves for an example and admonition to us, upon
 “ whom the ends of the world are come.” They
 who not only opposed and rejected that light which
 GOD sent among them, but did what in them lay
 to extinguish and put it out, by “putting to death
 “ the SON of GOD,” deserved to have been immediately
 deprived of that light, and to have been left
 in utter darkness: but GOD was pleased in his great
 mercy, to grant a reprieve to them, and to continue
 the great blessing of the gospel to them for forty years
 longer: but when notwithstanding this, they still
 continued impenitent, GOD at last withdrew this
 light, and by a particular providence gave warning to
 the christians to flee from Jerusalem, just before the
 siege was laid to it; and then “darkness came up-
 “ on them indeed, and they knew not whither they
 “ went,” nor what they did; “the things of their
 “ peace were then hid from their eyes, because they
 “ would not know the time of their visitation.”
 They fell into the greatest disorders and confusions,
 and, by the just judgment of GOD, were strangely
 blinded and hardened to their own ruin, and being
 forsaken of GOD, and of his glorious gospel, which
 they had rejected, they exercised all sorts of violence
 and

and cruelty upon one another, and were abandoned to all manner of wickedness and folly; not only offending against their own law, for which they pretended so great a veneration, but committing things contrary to all laws of nature and humanity; as may be seen at large in the history of the siege of Jerusalem, written by Josephus, who lived in that time.

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And there is the like danger, I do not say of the very same judgments (for there was something peculiar in their case, they not only rejecting and abusing the gospel, but killing and crucifying the Son of God, who brought those glad tidings to them;) but of very great and dismal calamities, if ever we provoke God by our abuse of the gospel, and great unfruitfulness under it, to deprive us of so invaluable a blessing. Whenever that leave us, we may expect the most dismal judgments and calamities to break in upon us.

For that parable concerning the husbandmen, who instead of rendering to their lord "the fruits of his vineyard in due season, evilly entreated, and killed those whom he sent to them," I say this parable, though it immediately respected the Jews, yet it does in proportion concern all that live unfruitfully under the gospel, Matth. xxi. 40, 41. "When the lord therefore of the vineyard cometh, what will he do unto those husbandmen? they say unto him, he will miserably destroy those wicked men, and will let out his vineyard unto other husbandmen, which shall render him the fruits in their seasons." And ver. 43, 44. "Therefore I say unto you, says our LORD, the kingdom of God shall be taken from you, and given

SERM. " to a nation bringing forth the fruits thereof. And
 CCXLVIII. " whosoever shall fall on this stone, shall be broken :
 " but on whomsoever it shall fall, it will grind him
 " to powder."

The removal of the gospel from any people, as it is the greatest judgment in itself, so it is likely to be accompanied with the greatest temporal miseries and calamities : and so in fact it hath happened, not only to the Jews, whose case, as I said before, hath something in it peculiar, but to other churches and nations. To the seven famous churches of Asia, the cities of them being demolished and laid waste, and the very place of several of them hardly known at this day. And so likewise it hath happened to the flourishing churches of Africa, where christianity is extinguished, and the place of them now the great seat of barbarism and slavery.

And God seems to set these examples before us, as a dreadful warning and admonition to us, and to say to us, as he did to the people of Jerusalem, Jer. vii. 12, 13, 14, 15. " Go ye now unto my place
 " which was in Shiloh, where I set my name at the
 " first, and see what I did to it, for the wickedness
 " of my people Israel. And now because ye have
 " done all these works, saith the LORD, and I spake
 " unto you, rising up early, and speaking, but ye
 " heard not ; and I called you, but ye answered not :
 " therefore will I do unto this house, which is called
 " by my name, wherein ye trust, and unto the
 " place which I gave to you, and to your fathers,
 " as I have done to Shiloh. And I will cast you
 " out of my sight, as I have cast out all your brethren." I proceed to the

Fifth particular I mentioned, which is to consider SERM.
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by what means God is more especially provoked to deprive a people of the light of the gospel, and the means of salvation. By these two more especially : By a general barrenness and unfruitfulness under them : and by a general impiety and wickedness.

1. By a general barrenness and unfruitfulness under the means and opportunities of salvation plentifully afforded to us. This our SAVIOUR represents to us in the parable of the husbandmen, which I mentioned before “ who rendered no fruit of the “ vineyard let out to them,” for which they are threatened “ to have the vineyard taken from them, and let out to other husbandmen, that will render “ the fruits of it in their seasons.” And in the same chapter, Matth. xxi. 19. we find our SAVIOUR “ cursing the fig-tree, which he saw in the way, because he found nothing thereon, but leaves only.” Leaves are the outward shew and profession of religion : but if there be no fruit, we may justly fear a curse : for our SAVIOUR did not curse the fig-tree for its own sake, but for our example. *Sterilitas nostra in ficu vapulat*, “ our barrenness is corrected “ and chastised in the curse which he pronounced “ upon the fig-tree.” To the same purpose there is a remarkable parable of a barren fig-tree, and of the husbandman’s patient expectation of fruit from it, Luke xiii. 7, 8, 9. after three years waiting, “ then said he unto the dresser of his vineyard, behold, these three years I come seeking fruit on “ this fig-tree, and find none. Cut it down ; why “ cumbereth it the ground ? and he answering, said “ unto him, lord let it alone this year also, till I shall

SERM. "dig about it, and dung it: and if it bear fruit, well:
 CXLVIII. "and if not, then after that thou shalt cut it down."

It is literally true, that fruit may be expected from a fig-tree, at farthest the third year; and if in that time it do not bear, it is almost in vain to expect it: but our SAVIOUR intended by this parable to improve the Jews, among whom he had taken so much pains for three years, and was now upon his fourth, resolving with the utmost patience to expect the fruit of repentance, and obedience to his doctrine, and then to leave them, and withdraw that light from them which they made no use of: and yet after this, he continued his apostles among them, who preached the doctrine of life and salvation to them for many years, before he punished their barrenness under all those means, by taking away his gospel from them, and giving them up to utter ruin and destruction.

2. Another and higher provocation of almighty God to take away his gospel from a nation, is great and general impiety and wickedness, and universal corruption and depravation of manners. When the vineyard which God hath planted with so much care, doth not only "not bring forth good grapes," but bring forth wild grapes," as it is in the parable of the prophet Isaiah, concerning the house of Israel; then God will "break down the hedge of it, and lay it waste; and will also command the clouds, that they rain no rain upon it." When no means will prevail upon a people to bring them to goodness, God will then give over all care of them, and deprive them of the means whereby they should be made better. When they do not
 only

only frustrate his expectation, but do quite contrary SERM.
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to what he looked for, he will be no farther concerned
for them. So we find in the application of that pa-
rable, Isa. v. 7. "For the vineyard of the Lord
"of hosts, is the house of Israel, and the men of
"Judah his pleasant plant: and he looked for judg-
"ment, but behold oppression; for righteousness,
"but behold a cry." And this we find under the
"gospel, Heb. vi. 7, 8, "For the earth which
"drinketh in the rain that cometh oft upon it, and
"bringeth forth herbs meet for them by whom it
"is dressed, receiveth blessing from God. But
"that which beareth thorns and briers, is rejected,
and is nigh unto cursing, whose end is to be burn-
ed." Briers and thorns are not mere unfruitful-
ness under the gospel; but contempt of it, and af-
fronting it by our wicked lives. When infidelity
and contempt of religion appear openly in a nation,
and impiety and vice grow impudent and universal,
even when the gospel shineth in its clearest and
strongest light, and the wrath of God not only in
his word, but by his providence, and "by terrible
"things in righteousness," is so plainly "revealed
"from heaven, against all ungodliness and unrighte-
"ousness of men;" when people are taught their
"duty, and the true knowledge of God, but will
"receive no instruction, but persist in their lewd
and vicious courses, and "commit iniquity with
"greediness;" this, if any thing, is a just provo-
cation of almighty God, "to remove his candle-
"stick" from such a nation as this, and to leave
them in darkness; since light hath no other effect
upon them, but to make them more wild and extra-
vagant. There remains only the

SERM. ^{CCXLVIII.} Sixth and last particular, which I mentioned, to be spoken to, namely, what is the way and means to prevent so dismal a judgment, and to procure, if it may be, “a lengthening of our tranquillity,” and a longer enjoyment of the means and opportunities of grace and salvation. And our best direction in this case, will be to follow the counsel which the SPIRIT gives to the seven churches of Asia, to prevent “the removing of their candlestick out of its place,” that is, their being deprived of the light of the gospel, which shone so clearly among them. “He then that hath an ear, let him hear what the SPIRIT saith unto the churches.” To the church of Ephesus, Rev. ii. 5. “Remember from whence thou art fallen, and repent, and do the first works; or else I will come unto thee quickly, and will remove thy candlestick out of his place, except thou repent.” To the church of Smyrna, verse 10. “Fear none of those things which thou shalt suffer: behold, the devil shall cast some of you into prison, that ye may be tried, and ye shall have tribulation ten days. Be thou faithful unto death, and I will give thee a crown of life.” To the church of Pergamos, verse 16. “Repent; or else I will come unto thee quickly.” To the church of Sardis, chap. iii. 2, 3. “Be watchful, and strengthen the things which remain, that are ready to die: for I have not found thy works perfect before God. Remember therefore how thou hast received, and heard, and hold fast, and repent. If therefore thou shalt not watch, I will come on thee as a thief, and thou shalt not know what hour I will come upon thee.” To the church of Laodicea, ver. 19. “Be zealous therefore, and repent.”

You

You see what are the means prescribed by the SERM.
SPIRIT of GOD, to prevent the “removing of our CCXLVIII.
“candlestick out of its place;” to be sensible, of
our great degeneracy from our primitive piety, and
the strict practice of religion, and to exercise a deep
repentance for it, and effectually to reform, and
“do our first works. Remember whence thou art
“fallen, and repent, and do thy first works.” And
then great vigilancy and watchfulness, that we be
not surpris’d before we are aware. “Be watchful :
“for if thou shalt not watch, I will come on thee
“as a thief; and thou shalt not know what hour
“I will come upon thee.” Now watchfulness im-
plies great sobriety and temperance, and is usually
joined with fervent and earnest prayer. “Watch
“ye therefore and pray always. Next, “to hold
“fast” the doctrine which we have “received and
“heard, the faith which was once delivered to the
“saints,” as St. Jude calls it. “Remember how
“thou hast received, and heard, and hold fast.”
And lastly, zeal for God’s glory, and an undaunted
resolution to adhere to it, notwithstanding all dangers
and sufferings. “Be zealous: fear none of those
“things which thou shalt suffer, but be thou faith-
“ful unto the death.”

If we follow this counsel, we may hope, nay we
may be assured, that God will still continue to us
the blessed means and opportunities of grace and
salvation; that our pastors shall “not be removed
“into corners, but that our eyes shall still see our
“teachers;” that God will not let “darkness come
“upon us:” or if the light of the gospel should
be obscured and eclipsed, that it will be but for
a little while, and will soon pass over. But if we

SERM. will not hearken and obey, if we will not “repent
 CCXLVIII. “and do our first works,” we have reason to apprehend, that GOD will come against us quickly, “and remove our candlestick out of its place,” and take away that light which we have abused, and carry it into some other quarter of the world; and, as our SAVIOUR threatens the Jews, “that the “kingdom of GOD shall be taken from us, and “given to a nation that will bring forth the fruits “of it.”

I shall only add that counsel given by the prophet Daniel to king Nebuchadnezzar, and which is very proper for a people and nation, and likewise for particular persons, for the prevention of spiritual, as well as temporal judgments, Dan. iv. 27. “Break off thy sins by righteousness, and thine iniquities by shewing mercy to the poor; if it “may be a lengthening of thy tranquillity.” Nothing so likely, not only to reconcile GOD to us, but to turn away his judgments from us, as repentance, and reformation of our wicked lives, and the practice of alms and charity. “Alms shall deliver “from death,” saith the wise man, speaking of the benefit that redounds to particular persons: and by parity of reason, the charity and alms of a great number may save a nation, both from temporal and spiritual judgments; charity and alms to the poor, especially those who are poor and destitute, by “forsaking all for GOD, and his truth.” And nothing gives greater hopes of GOD’s mercy to us, than that general charitable disposition which appears among us.

What I have said needs no long application: I shall therefore do it in very few words. This calls

upon the whole nation, and every one of us, “ to SERM.
“ remember from whence we are fallen, and to re- ^{CCXLVIII.}
“ pent and do our first works;” and to endeavour
to recover that ancient piety and virtue, which flourished in the days of our forefathers, and was so great an ornament to our holy religion. Blessed be God, that by his goodness and the protection of a gracious prince, we still enjoy the blessed means and opportunities of grace and salvation: but if we be still unfruitful under them, and will not “ walk in the
“ light,” the just providence of God may have a thousand ways to deprive us of it, “ and to bring
“ darkness upon us.”

And what I have said in general to the whole nation, and what our SAVIOUR here says to the Jews, we may accommodate every one to ourselves. “ Yet
“ a little while the light is with us: let us walk in
“ the light while we have it, lest darkness come up-
“ on us.” We know not how long the opportunity of life, as well as of grace, may be continued to us; they may be taken from us, or we may be cut off from them.

The season of our solemn repentance is now approaching; let us improve it, as if it were to be our last opportunity of making our peace with God; and let us lose no time; lest we die in our delay, and in our security we be destroyed.

I will conclude with the earnest exhortation of the prophet Jeremiah, chap. xiii. 16. “ Give glory to
“ the LORD your God,” that is, repent, “ before
“ he cause darkness, and before your feet stumble
“ upon the dark mountains, and while ye look for
“ light, he turn it into the shadow of death, and
“ make it gross darkness.” To which I will only
“ add

“ add the advice of our blessed SAVIOUR, Luke xxi. 36. “ Watch ye therefore and pray always, that ye “ may be accounted worthy to escape all these things “ that shall come to pass, and to stand before the SON “ of MAN.

S E R M O N CCXLIX.

The folly of hazarding eternal life for temporal enjoyments.

MATTH. xvi. 26.

For what is a man profited, if he shall gain the whole world, and lose his own soul? or what shall a man give in exchange for his soul?

SERM.
CCXLIX.

THE great question that a wise man puts to himself in any design or undertaking, is this, what shall I be the better for it, if I obtain what I seek for? If all things succeed according to my desire, what benefit and advantage will it be to me? or if I gain in one respect, shall I not be as great, or a greater loser in another? When all things are calculated and cast up, what will be the foot of the account? Upon the whole matter, and in the final issue and result of things, what will be the gain or loss? For though the advantage appear never so great in one respect, yet if this be over-balanced by a greater hazard and loss in another kind, far more considerable; it is upon the whole matter a foolish bargain, and a wise man will not meddle with it. And this is the question which
our

our SAVIOUR here puts, "what is a man profit-
"ed?" &c. SERM.
CCXLIX.

For the understanding of which words, we must look back to the verses immediately before, wherein our SAVIOUR tells his followers, upon what terms they may be his disciples, and lift themselves in his service, ver. 24, 25. "If any man will be my "disciple, let him deny himself, and take up his "cross, and follow me. Whosoever will save his "life, shall lose it: and whosoever will lose his life "for my sake, shall find it;" that is, whosoever by declining the profession of the gospel for fear of persecution, shall hope to save his temporal life, shall lose that which is infinitely more considerable, eternal life, and whosoever for my sake and the gospel's, shall expose himself to persecution and the loss of his temporal life, shall find a better life in lieu of it, shall at last be made partaker of eternal life. And this certainly is wisdom, not to lose that which is more valuable, for the purchasing of that which is less considerable: "For what is a man profited?" &c.

"What is a man profited, if he gain the whole "world, and lose his own soul?" Here our translators have unnecessarily changed the signification of the same word that was used before: for the word here translated, Soul, is the very same which is used for life, in the verse before; and there's no reason to alter the rendering of it; for the sense is very current thus; "Whosoever will save his life shall "lose it; and whosoever will lose his life for my "sake, shall find it. For what is a man profited "if he gain the whole world, and lose his life? or "what shall a man give in exchange for his life?"

This

SERM. This was a proverbial speech used among the Jews,
 CCXIX. to signify that men value life above any thing in this
 world, and it seems to allude to that expression in
 Job, "Skin for skin, and all that a man hath, will
 "he give for his life;" that is, men will part with
 any thing in this world to save their lives.

Now this proverbial sentence, which the Jews used
 concerning this temporal life, our SAVIOUR does
 very fitly apply to the purpose he was speaking of,
 and argues *à fortiori*, from this temporal life to eter-
 nal life. For if we think all that we have, well be-
 stowed to ransom our lives, then much more should
 we be willing to part with this mortal life, and all
 the enjoyments of it, to purchase eternal life, which
 doth in true value more exceed this life, than this
 life does any thing else in this world.

And that our SAVIOUR doth apply this proverb
 of the Jews to a higher purpose, namely, to eternal
 life, is plain, from what he adds in the verse after the
 text, "For the SON of MAN shall come in the glory
 "of his FATHER, with his angels, and then he shall
 "reward every man according to his works;" that
 is, there is another life after this, wherein men shall
 be happy or miserable according as they have be-
 haved themselves in this world, and then it will ap-
 pear who have made the best bargain, and who at
 last will prove the greatest gainers, they who by
 following me have hazarded this temporal life, and
 receive in lieu of it life eternal; or they who, by
 denying me, have secured their temporal lives, but
 forfeited the eternal life and happiness of the next
 world.

So, that the meaning and force of our SAVIOUR's
 argument is plainly this; what advantage would it
 be

be to any man, if he could gain the whole world, and should be ruined for ever? or what would a man, that had brought himself into this miserable condition, give to redeem and rescue himself out of it?

SERM.
CCXLIX.

And that this is plainly our SAVIOUR's meaning, will appear, if we consider how St. Luke expresseth the same thing, Luke ix. 25. "What is a man advantaged, if he gain the whole world, and lose himself, and be cast away?" So that the emphasis and force of our SAVIOUR's argument, is not to be laid upon the word Soul, as our translators seem to have laid it; for St. Luke hath omitted this word: but it lies in the application of this proverbial speech, which the Jews used concerning this temporal life, to life eternal.

Having thus cleared the true meaning and intention of these words, I shall consider in them, what may be most useful for us to fix our thoughts and meditations upon.

In these words we have two cases supposed, and a question put upon each of them.

First, suppose a man should gain the whole world, and ruin himself for ever, what would be the advantage of it? "What is a man profited, if he gain the whole world, and lose himself?"

Secondly, suppose a man had made such a bargain, and undone himself for ever, to gain the world; when he comes to be sensible of his folly, what would he not give to undo this bargain? "What will a man give in exchange for his soul?" that is, to redeem and recover what he hath lost.

And indeed these questions carry their own answer and resolution in them. Suppose a man should gain

SERM. gain the whole world, and ruin himself for ever, what
 CCXLIX. advantage would it be to him? would it be any?

No, certainly, very far from it; for the words are a *μείωσις*, and signify more than they seem to express; “what is a man profited?” that is, he would be so far from being a gainer, that he would be a vast loser by it.

And suppose a man had made such a bargain, had thus undone himself to gain the world, would he not reflect severely upon his own folly afterward? Yes certainly, he would give the whole world, if he had it, to undo it again.

So that the sense of these words may be resolved into these two propositions:

First, that it is a foolish bargain for a man “to lose his soul,” and forfeit his eternal happiness, upon any terms, though it were “to gain the whole world.”

Secondly, that whoever makes this bargain, will one time or other sadly rue it, and be sensible of the monstrous folly of it. “What would a man give in exchange for his soul?” that is, what would he not give to be put in his former condition, and be left to make a new choice?

First, that it would be a most foolish bargain, for a man to purchase the whole world with the loss of his soul, and his eternal happiness.

The folly of this one would think sufficiently evident at first sight; yet we see men every day guilty of it, so that either they do not discern it, or they do not consider it; therefore to make men sensible of their monstrous folly herein, we will consider these two things:

I. How

I. How inconsiderable the purchase is. And,

II. How great a price is paid for it. For that is a foolish bargain, when we pay a great deal too much for a thing, a mighty price for that which is little worth.

I. The purchase is inconsiderable. Our SAVIOUR here puts the case to the greatest advantage on the purchaser's side, and makes the very best of it, he supposeth the gain much greater than any man ever made, he puts a case next to an impossibility, that "a man shall gain the whole world," which no man ever did, or was in any probability of doing. Alexander bid fairest for it, and because he over-ran a few great countries, is called a conqueror of the world; but let a man survey the globe, and he will soon see how small a part of the world he had mastered; it was but inconsiderable in comparison of the rest of the then known world; and much less if we take in those vast and spacious regions, which have since been discovered; so that if he had understood either the world, or himself better, he might have spared his crying for want of more to subdue. But suppose a man could "gain all the world," and command all the conveniencies and pleasures of it, yet all this, if it be duly weighed, would be found to be no great purchase, especially if we consider these three things:

1. If we had it all, yet the great uncertainty of holding it, or any part of it.

2. The impossibility of using and enjoying it all.

3. If we had it, and could use it all, the improbability of being contented with it. If a man had the whole world, 'tis uncertain whether he could hold it, or any part of it for any time; if he should hold

SERM. hold it, it is impossible he should use and enjoy it
 CCXLIX. all; if he could use it, 'tis probable he would not
 be contented with it: and what a goodly purchase is
 this? when it is all of it uncertain; and the greatest
 part of it useless to us; and when we have it, we
 are as far from satisfaction, as if we were without
 it. All these considerations must needs mightily sink
 the value of this purchase, and take us off from our
 fondness of a small part, when the whole is so in-
 considerable.

1. If we had it all, the uncertainty of holding it,
 or any part of it. The very supposition of "gain-
 ing the world" doth imply, that it is lost from
 those that had it before; which shews the possession
 of these things to be uncertain, and that they are not
 sure to continue in the same hand. When Alexan-
 der conquered Darius, and took his kingdoms, just
 so much as Alexander got, Darius lost; so that if
 a man could gain the whole world from those who
 are now the lords and possessors of it, the very gain-
 ing of it from others, must needs be a demonstration
 to him of the fickleness and uncertainty of these
 things.

No man is sure of any thing in this world for his
 life, or for any considerable part of it; and if he
 were, yet no man is sure of his life for one moment.
 How many ways hath the providence of God to
 change the greatest prosperity of this world into the
 greatest misery and sorrow, and in an instant to
 overturn the greatest fortune, to throw down the
 proudest aspirer, to impoverish the wealthiest prince,
 and to make extremely miserable, the most happy
 man that ever was in the world. This change of
 fortune may be made by the rapine of our ene-
 mies,

mies, or the treachery of our friends; by a storm at SERM.
sea, or a fire at land; by our own folly, or by the ^{CCXLIX.}
malice of others, or by the immediate hand of
God.

Nay all the outward circumstances of happiness may continue firm and unshaken, and yet a man may be extremely miserable by the inward vexation and discontent of his own mind; and if riches, and greatness, and prosperity would stick by us, we ourselves are fickle and uncertain. "Our life is a
"vapour" easily blown away, and though it be the foundation of all other enjoyments in this world, yet it is as frail and inconstant as any of them; so that if a man could gain the whole world, yet this great purchase would be clogged with a double uncertainty, either of losing it, or leaving it; either of having these taken from us, or ourselves snatched from them.

2. Suppose a man had gained the whole world, and were sure to keep it for a considerable time, yet it is impossible he should enjoy it all. Though no man yet ever had, yet it is possible he may have a title to the whole world, and a great deal of care and trouble to secure that against the violence and ambition of others; but a title to a thing is one thing, and the real use of it another. There are a great many things in the world, of which no man ever yet understood the true nature and proper use; to these a man may have a title, and be actually possessed of them, yet no man can be said to enjoy any thing farther than he understands the nature and use of it. But suppose this great man had a mind and understanding vast and boundless as his dominion and possessions are; yet he could enjoy but a very

SER M. small part of what he possesseth ; there are millions in
 CCXLIX. the world, that in despite of him would share these
 things equally with him ; equally, I say, to all the
 purposes of human life, and of a temporal felicity,
 and enjoy as much as he.

It may perhaps give a man some imaginary pleasure, to survey in his thoughts, how much he hath the command of ; but when he hath done, he cannot tell what to do with the hundred thousandth part of what he possesseth, he cannot so much as have the sight and transitory pleasure of beholding it with his eyes, any otherwise than in a chart or map, which every man else may do as well as he ; but as to all real benefits and advantages, he can enjoy but a very small part of the world, according to the necessity and the capacity of a man.

He hath indeed wherewithal to make himself more soft and delicate, wherewith to surfeit sooner, and to be sick oftener than other men ; but whatever can minister to true pleasure and delight, and serve any real occasions of nature, there are thousands in the world will enjoy as well as he. He may have the opportunity of cloying himself with the sight of more dishes, and of being almost every day stifled in the crowd of a numerous train, and of doing every thing with a thousand eyes upon him ; but he must of necessity want both the real pleasure and enjoyment of a great many things, which even a poorer man may have ; he can neither eat with that appetite, nor sleep with that pleasure that a labouring man does. The constant fulness both of his stomach, and table, make him incapable of ever having a feast, and the height and prosperity of his fortune keep him from having any friends ; or which comes all to one, from
 knowing

knowing that he hath any ; for that no man can SERM.
CCXLIX.
know till the change of his condition give him the opportunity to discern between his friends and his flatterers.

So that if a man could “ gain the whole world,” it would be no such mighty purchase ; and the very first thing such a man would do, if he were wise enough to contrive his own happiness, would be to take so much to himself, as would serve all the real uses and conveniencies of human life, and to rid his hands of the rest as fast as he could. And who can think it reasonable, eagerly to desire and seek after that, which a wise man would think it reasonable to part with if he had it.

3. If it were possible that one man could gain, and really use all the world, it is a thousand to one this man would find no great happiness and contentment in it ; because we see in daily experience, that it is not the increase of riches, or the accessions of honours, that give a man happiness and satisfaction ; because this does not spring from external enjoyments, but from the inward frame and disposition of a man’s mind : and that a man who can govern his passions, and stint his desires, will as soon find contentment in a moderate fortune, as in the revenues of a kingdom ; and he that cannot do this, is not to be satisfied with abundance ; he hath an unnatural thirst, like that of a dropsy, which is sooner quenched by abstinence, than by drinking, the more he pours in, the more he is inflamed.

He that considers the world, may easily observe, that poverty and contentment do much oftener meet together, than a great fortune and a satisfied mind. All fulness is naturally uneasy, and men are many
O 2 times

SERM. times in greater pain after a full meal, than before
 CCXLIX. they sat down. The greatest enjoyments of this world,
 as they are vanity, so they are usually attended with
 vexation of spirit.

God hath so contrived things, that ordinarily the pleasures of human life do consist more in hope than enjoyment: so that if a man had "gained all the world," one of the chief pleasures of life would be gone, because there would be nothing more left for him to hope for in this world. For whatever happiness men may fancy to themselves in things at a distance, there is not a more melancholy condition, than to be at the top of greatness, and to have nothing more left to aspire after; and he is a miserable man, whose desires are not satisfied, and yet his hopes are at an end; so that if a man could do what Alexander thought he had done, conquer the whole world, when that work was over, he would in all probability do, just as he did, sit down and weep that there were nothing more left for him to do. You see then what the purchase amounts to; suppose a man could "gain the whole world," he would be as far from contentment as he that possesseth the least share and portion of it. Let us now consider in the

II. Place, the price that is here supposed to be paid for it; the man "gains the whole world, but he loseth his own soul," that is, he ruins himself for ever; he deprives himself of a happiness infinitely greater than this world can afford, and that not for a little while, but for ever; and he exposeth himself to a misery so great, as no man that considers it, would endure for one hour, for all the pleasures and enjoyments of this world.

And

And now the purchase may be allowed to be very SERM.
considerable, when so intolerable a price is paid for CCXLIX.
it; when for the present enjoyment of so short and
imperfect a felicity, as this world can afford, a man
hath quitted his interest in a blessed immortality, and
chose “to dwell with everlasting burnings.” I am
really afraid to tell you how much misery is involved
in these few words, of “losing a man’s soul;” the
consideration of it is so full of horror, that I am loth
to enter into it.

The loss is great and irreparable; great beyond
all imagination; for he that loseth his soul, loseth
himself; not his being, that would be a happy loss
indeed; but that still remains to be a foundation of
misery, and the scene of perpetual woe and discon-
tent. The loss of the soul implies the loss of God,
and of happiness, and all that is desirable and de-
lightful to a reasonable creature; nay it does not
only signify the privation of happiness, but the in-
fliction of the greatest misery and torment. Could
I represent to you those dismal prisons into which
wicked and impure souls are thrust, and the mis-
eries they there endure, without the least spark of com-
fort, or glimmering of hope, how they are compassed
about with woe, and lie wallowing in the flames,
how they sigh and groan under the intolerable wrath
of God, the insolent scorn and cruelty of devils,
the severe lashes, and raging anguish, and fearful
despair of their own minds, without intermission,
without pity, without hope; could I represent these
things to you, you were not able to hear the least
part of what these miserable wretches are condemned
for ever to endure.

SERM.

CCXLIX.

And the loss is not only vast, but irreparable; the soul once lost, is lost for ever. We may part with our souls to gain the world; but if we would give a thousand worlds, we cannot regain our souls. "The redemption of a soul is precious, and ceaseth for ever." The loss of it is so great, that nothing can recompence it; and so fatal, that it is never to be repaired. The happiness that the man parts withal, who makes this mad bargain, is so vast, both in respect of the degree and duration of it, that nothing can make amends for so great a loss; and the sufferings which the man exposeth himself to are so dreadful, that "all the kingdoms of the world and the glory of them" can be no temptation to any man, to run the hazard of enduring them. Epicurus, who very well understood the rates of pain and pleasure, is peremptory in this assertion, that it is a great folly for any man to purchase pleasure with equal pain; because there is nothing got by it, they balance one another: it must surely then be a strange madness in any man, for the transitory delights of this world, to forfeit the eternal pleasures of God's presence, and for the joys of a moment, to live in pain for ever.

And is it not then a prodigious folly that possesseth sinners, who can be contented to venture their souls and their happiness, their immortal souls, and their everlasting happiness, upon such cheap and easy terms? the folly is great, if we only consider what an unequal price they pay for so small a purchase: but it is much greater, if we regard the foolish order of their choice; first to please themselves with a shadow and appearance of happiness,

pinels, and then to be really miserable afterward. SERM.
CCXLIX.
If the happiness were true and real, it were an imprudent method. As if a man should choose to enjoy a great estate for a few days, and to be extremely poor the remaining part of his life. If there were any necessity of making so unequal a bargain, surely a man would reserve the best condition to the last; for precedent sufferings and trouble do mightily recommend the pleasures that are to ensue, and render them more tasteful than they would otherwise have been; whereas the greatest heightening of misery, the saddest aggravation of an unhappy condition, is to fall into it from the height of a prosperous fortune. It is comfortable for a man to come out of the cold to a warm fire: but if a man in a great heat shall leap into the cold water, it will strike him to the heart. Such is the fond choice of every sinner, to pass immediately out of a state of the greatest sensual pleasure, into the most quick and sensible torments. This our SAVIOUR fully represents to us in the parable of Lazarus and the rich man, Luke xvi. 25. where Abraham is brought in upbraiding the rich man for his foolish and preposterous choice, “Son, remember that thou “in thy life time receivedst thy good things, and “likewise Lazarus evil things: but now he is comforted, and thou art tormented.” This made a vast difference; the rich man received his good things first, and then was tormented: Lazarus first received his evil things, and then was comforted; and how comfortable was Abraham’s bosom to him, after he had lain in so much misery and want at the rich man’s gate? and on the other hand, how grievous must pain and torment be to that man,

SERM. who never was acquainted with any thing but ease
 CCXLIX. and pleasure?

But it may be all this is but a supposition; and there is no man so forsaken of his reason, and of common prudence, as to make such a bargain. Surely no man that is reasonable, no man that considers the difference between time and eternity, between a few years, and everlasting ages, can be persuaded to forego the happiness of heaven, and “to fall into the hands of the living God,” no not if the whole world were offered to him for consideration. Indeed these large terms of “gaining “the whole world,” are but a supposition, which our SAVIOUR makes to shew the unreasonableness of most mens choice; but in truth, and in effect the case of sinners is much worse. Among all those numerous troops of sinners that go to hell in such throngs, there is not one of them that ever made himself so wise a bargain; and though “the whole “world” be but a pitiful price to be paid for a man’s soul, yet so stupid are the greatest part of those creatures, whom we call reasonable, as to strike up a bargain for little scraps and portions of this world. There are but few who stand upon such terms as this world thinks considerable. They are a sort of more generous sinners, that damn themselves for a crown and a kingdom, that will not do an act of injustice upon lower terms than a manor or a lordship. Alas! most men barter away their souls for a trifle; and set their eternal happiness to sale for a thing of nought. How many are there who, to gratify their covetousness or lust, or revenge, or any other inordinate passion, are content to hazard the loss of their souls? who will go to hell rather than be out of the

the fashion; and damn themselves out of mere compliment to the company, and cannot be persuaded to leave off that foolish custom of swearing, which hath neither pleasure nor profit in it, no, not to save their souls?

SERM.
CCXLIX.

Thus it is in truth, and the supposition which our SAVIOUR here makes of “gaining the whole world,” is but a feigned case, the market was never yet so high, no sinner had ever yet so great a value for his immortal soul, as to stand upon such terms; alas! infinitely less than “the whole world,” a little fordid gain, the gratifying of a vile lust, or an unmanly passion, the smile or the frown of a great man, the fear of singularity, and of displeasing the company; these, and such like mean and pitiful considerations, tempt thousands every day to make away themselves, and to be undone for ever.

I have done with the first thing, the folly of this adventure, “What is a man profited, if he shall gain the whole world, and lose his own soul?” I proceed to the

Second, the severe reflexion men will make upon themselves for this their folly. What would they not give to undo this foolish bargain? “What will a man give in exchange for his soul” to redeem and recover so great a loss? and sooner or later every man will be sensible of this folly; probably in this world, but most certainly in the other; and then “What would a man give in exchange for his soul?”

Whenever the sinner comes to reflect upon himself, and to consider seriously what he hath done, with what indignation will he look upon himself, and censure his own folly? Like a man who in a drunken

SERM. drunken fit hath past away his estate for a trifling
CCXLIX. consideration; the next morning when he is sober
 and come to himself, and finds himself a beggar, how does he rate himself for being such a beast and a fool, as to do that in a blind and rash heat, which he will have cause to repent, as long as he hath a day to live?

Or if the sinner be able to keep off these thoughts, while he is well and in health, yet when he is seized upon by sickness, and comes to lie upon a death-bed, he will then, in all probability, be sadly sensible what a fool he hath been. When he shall stand upon the confines of eternity, and look back upon this world; which how considerable soever it once appeared to him, can signify nothing now that he is to leave it; when he considers how much he hath parted with, and is now like to lose for ever, the false and treacherous advantages of a vain world, he will then need no body to convince him of his error, to aggravate his folly to him; he now repents heartily that he was not wiser, and wisheth for nothing so much as that God would grant him time to revoke and undo this foolish bargain; and how glad would he be to give the world back again to secure his soul, and to throw up all his unjust gain, and the advantages he hath indirectly made by fraud or violence? This I doubt not is the sense of most men, when they come to leave the world; and if it is true then, it is so now. Let us then, while the opportunities of life are before us, suffer these considerations to take place and prevail, which otherwise will wound us to the heart, and fill our souls with anguish and despair in a dying hour.

O the

O the folly and stupidity of men! to be so transported with present and sensible things, as to have no consideration of our future state, no pity for our souls, no sense of our everlasting abode in another world; to be so blinded by sense, so bribed by "the pleasures of sin, which are but for a moment," as to forfeit the happiness of all eternity! when the pleasure is past and gone, and the dear price comes to be paid down, and our souls are leaving this world, and going to take possession of that everlasting inheritance of shame and sorrow, of "tribulation and anguish," which we have purchased to ourselves by our own folly, how shall we then repent ourselves of that bargain which we have so rashly made, but can never be released from!

It is our lot, who have the souls of men committed to our charge, to see many of these sad sights. O my God! what confusion have I sometimes seen in the face of a dying man! what terrors on every side, what restless working, and violent throws of a guilty conscience! and how are we tempted (who commonly are sent for too late to minister comfort to such persons) I say, how are we tempted to sow pillows under their uneasy heads, and out of very pity and compassion, are afraid to say the worst, and are grieved at our very hearts to speak those sad truths, which yet are fit for them to hear! It is very grievous to see a man in the paroxysms of a fever, or in the extreme torment of the stone, or in the very agony of death: but the saddest sight in the world, is the anguish of a dying sinner; nothing looks so ghastly, as the final despair of a wicked man, "when God is taking away his soul."

But whatever sense men have of these things when they come to lie upon a sick bed; every sinner will

SERM. most certainly be convinced, when he comes into another world. We shall then have nothing to divert us from these thoughts ; we shall feel that which will be a sensible demonstration to us of our own folly. Then men will curse those false and flattering pleasures which have cheated them into so much misery ; but their own folly most of all, for being so easily abused. Then would they give ten thousand worlds, if they had them, to recover the opportunity of a new choice ; but it cannot be : they parted with their souls once at a cheap rate ; but no price will then be accepted for the redemption of them.

O that men would consider these things in time, for they are plain and evident to those that will consider them. Our SAVIOUR tells us, we have so much evidence, that he that will not be convinced by it, “ would not be persuaded, though one rose from the dead to testify unto him.” We have MOSES and the prophets ; nay, we have the SON of GOD himself, who hath revealed these things to us ; and if we would but attend to them, and suffer them to sink into our hearts, nothing in this would could be a temptation to any of us to do any thing, or to neglect any thing, to the prejudice of our immortal souls.

Therefore to conclude this discourse, whenever by any present pleasure or advantage we are tempted to provoke GOD, and to destroy our own souls, let us consider what an unequal bargain we make, how little we purchase, and how much we part withal. Whenever we are solicited to any sin, let us take time to answer the question here in the text, “ what is a man profited, if he shall gain the whole world, and lose his own soul, &c.

S E R-

S E R M O N - CCL.

The reasonableness of fearing God more
than man.

LUKE xii. 4, 5.

And I say unto you, my friends, be not afraid of them that kill the body, and after that have no more that they can do. But I will forewarn you whom ye shall fear: fear him, which after he hath killed, hath power to cast into hell, yea, I say unto you, fear him.

TH E occasion of these words will more SERM.
clearly appear, if we compare this dis- CCL.
course of our SAVIOUR's, as it is here re-
cording by St. Luke, with that fuller account of it ^{The first}
given by St. Matthew chap. x. where our SAVIOUR sermon on
having called his disciples together, and given them this text.
their commission, and the rules and instructions they
were to observe in the execution of it, he warns
them likewise of the opposition they would meet
with, and the persecution that would attend them
in the faithful discharge of their duty; nevertheless,
he bids them take courage, and boldly to proclaim
the gospel, notwithstanding all the danger and ha-
zard it would expose them to: but because this is
very

SERM. very unwelcome and terrible to flesh and blood, to
 CCL. encounter the rage and fury of men, therefore to
 strengthen their resolution, and to fortify their spirits
 against these fears, he tells them of something much
 more terrible than the wrath or rage of men, viz. the
 anger and displeasure of God, that so he might chase
 away this lesser fear by a greater; "I say unto you,
 "my friends, be not afraid, &c."

The words are sufficiently plain, and need no explanation; only before I come to the main proposition which is contained in them, I shall take notice of these two important doctrines which are supposed in the text; the immortality of the soul, and the resurrection of the body.

First, the immortality of the soul, which is a principle of natural religion, and not any where, that I know of, expressly asserted in scripture; nor need it be so, being to be known by natural light, without divine revelation; but divine revelation did always suppose it, and take it for granted, as one of the foundations of religion. And I the rather take notice of it here, because I do not know any text from which it may be more immediately inferred, than from these words of our SAVIOUR, which necessarily imply these two things:

1. That the soul is not obnoxious to death, as the body is, "Fear not him that can kill the
 "body, but after that hath no more that he can
 "do;" which St. Matthew expresseth, "cannot
 "kill the soul."

2. That the soul remains after the death of the body. "Fear him, who after he hath killed, hath
 "power to cast into hell."

Secondly,

Secondly, another doctrine implied in these words **SERM.**
is that of the resurrection of the body; which is a **CCL.**
doctrine of pure revelation, and most clearly and
expresly revealed in the new testament: and in some
sort before to the Jews, who did generally believe
it before our SAVIOUR's coming, excepting the
sect of the Sadducees. This is supposed in the 5th
verse, "but fear him, who after he hath killed,
"hath power to cast into hell;" not only the soul,
but also to raise up the body which is killed, and
to torment it in hell; for so St. Matthew hath it
expresly, "but fear him that can destroy both body
"and soul in hell." Now the body, so long as it is
dead, is devoid of sense, and so incapable of torment,
till it be raised to life again. These being sup-
posed, I come to the main observation contained in
the words:

That GOD is infinitely more to be dreaded than
men.

The words indeed seem to reach farther, and to
be an absolute prohibition of the fear of men; but
it is an Hebrew phrase and manner of speaking,
when two things are opposed, to express many times
those things absolutely, which are to be understood
comparatively; as John vi. 27. "Labour not for
"the meat which perisheth; but for that meat
"which endureth unto everlasting life;" that is,
not so much for things temporal, as things eternal,
incomparably more for the one than the other. So
when our SAVIOUR says, "fear not them that can
"kill the body", that is, fear not men so much as
GOD, fear him infinitely more. It is very lawful
for us to fear men, and to stand in awe of their
power;

SERM. power; because "they can kill the body," and death
 CCL. is terrible: but when the power of man comes in
 competition with omnipotency, and what man can do
 to the body in this world, with what God can do to
 the body and soul in the other; there is no comparison
 between the terror of the one and the other.

The truth of this will appear, by comparing these two objects of fear together, God and man. Fear is a passion which is most deeply rooted in our nature, and flows immediately from that principle of self-preservation which is planted in every man's nature. We have a natural dread and horror for every thing that may hurt us, and endanger our being and happiness: now the greatest danger, is always from the greatest power; so that to make good the truth of this observation, we need do no more but compare the power of men, and God, and the effects of both, and then to calculate the difference; and if there appear to be a vast and infinite difference between them, it will be evident, that God is infinitely more to be dreaded than men.

First, we will consider the power of man, and what it is he can do; or rather his impotency, or what he cannot do.

Secondly, how much the power of God exceeds the power of men, and what he can do more?

First, we will consider the power of man, and what it is he can do; which our SAVIOUR expresseth in these words, "be not afraid of them that can kill the body, and after that have no more that they can do." Which signifies in general, that the power of man is finite and limited, and circumscribed within certain bounds, beyond
 which

which it cannot go; something it can do, but not \$ ERM.
much; it can hurt the body, yea and take away our CCL.
life; "it can kill the body," hither it can go, and
no farther.

More particularly in these words you have man's power, what he can do; and his impotency, what he can but do, the limits and bounds of his power.

I. The power of men, and what they can do, they can "kill the body," and take away our lives; which includes a power of doing whatever is less. All those evils and persecutions which fall short of death, these they can inflict upon us, they can "revile us, and speak all manner of evil against us; they can persecute us from one city to another, and bring us before councils, and scourge us in their synagogues; they can spoil us of our goods, and deprive us of our liberty; they can exercise us with bonds and imprisonments, with cruel mockings and scourgings, with hunger and thirst, with cold and nakedness;" they can many ways afflict and torment us, and at last they can put us to death; all this they can do by the permission of God; here is the sum of their power; give them all advantages, let them be united and combined together. Our SAVIOUR puts it in the plural number, "fear not them;" and let them be backed with human authority, which our SAVIOUR supposeth, when he speaks of bringing his disciples "before kings and governors." Thus much their power amounts to.

II. We will consider the impotency of men; which will appear in these two particulars:

I. That they cannot do this without the divine permission.

SERM. 2. That if they be permitted to do their worst,
 CCL. they can but do this; "after that they have no more
 "that they can do."

1. They cannot do this without the divine permission. The devil, though he hath a greater natural power than men, yet he could not touch Job, either in his substance or his body, without God's leave and permission. Men are apt to arrogate to themselves a great deal of power, forgetting whence they derive it, and on whom it depends. "Knowest thou not that I have power to crucify thee, and power to release thee?" said Pilate to our SAVIOUR: but he tells him, "thou couldst have no power at all against me, except it were given thee from above," John xix. 10, 11. All the power that men have, they have it from God, and he can check and countermand it when he pleaseth; he can "restrain the rage of men, and put a hook in their nostrils; he can still the noise of the sea, and the tumult of the people."

God's providence is continually vigilant over us, and unless it seem good to the divine wisdom to permit men, they cannot touch or hurt us. It is added immediately after the text, that the providence of God extends to creatures much less considerable than we are, and to the most inconsiderable things that belong to us; "are not two sparrows sold for a farthing, and yet not one of them is forgotten before God, or falls to the ground, without the will of our father? yea the very hairs of our heads are they not all numbered?" Much more is the providence of God concerned in our lives, and the more considerable accidents and events which befall us; we are always under God's eye
 and

and care, and no man can do us the least hurt without his permission. S E R M.
CCL.

2. If men be permitted to do their worst, they can but do this; "they can but kill the body, after that they have no more that they can do." Now this implies several limitations of mens power, and abatements of the terror of it.

1. "They can but kill the body," that is, they can only injure the worst and least considerable part of us. The power of the devil reacheth no farther than this, this was the worst mischief his malice could devise to do to Job, "to touch his bone and his flesh," and to take away his life; and all that the fury and rage of man can do, is to wound these vile bodies, and to spurn down these "houses of clay, whose foundations are already in the dust:" but the man's soul, which is himself, that they cannot touch; though they may pierce and break the cabinet; yet they cannot seize the jewel that is in it, and get that into their power and possession; when they have broken open this cage, "our soul will escape like a bird to his mountain." Men may invent several instruments to torture and afflict the body: but no weapon can be formed against the soul that can touch it or do it harm.

2. When they have killed the body, by doing this, they do but prevent nature a little, they do but antedate an evil a few moments, and bring our fears upon us a little sooner; they kill that which must die within a few days, though they should let it alone; they do but cut asunder that thread which would shortly break of itself, by its own weakness and rottenness; so that as the lepers reasoned, when the famine was in Samaria, 2 Kings vii.

SERM. 3, 4, "Why sit we here until we die? If we say,
 CCL. "we will enter into the city, then the famine is in
 { "the city, and we shall die there: and if we sit still
 "here, we die also. Now therefore come, and let
 "us fall unto the host of the Syrians: if they save
 "us alive, we shall live; and if they kill us, we
 "shall but die;" so we may reason in this case,
 why should we so much desire to sit still, till we
 die? If men persecute us, and do their worst, we shall
 die; and if they do not, however we shall die; there-
 fore let not the fear of any danger from men make
 us to forget our duty to God, for "if they kill us,
 "we shall but die?"

3. "They can but kill the body;" and what
 argument of power is this, to be able to kill that
 which is mortal? as if you should say, they can
 break a glass, they can throw down that which is
 falling. This is no such wonderful effect of power,
 to be able to do that which almost every thing can
 do, which the least thing in the world, which the
 poorest creature can do; a pin, or a thorn, or a
 grape stone; there is hardly any thing in the whole
 creation so inconsiderable, but it can do this which
 men are apt to boast of as so great an evidence of
 their power. We are frail creatures, and 'tis no
 mere melancholy conceit that we are made of glass,
 and as we pass through the world are liable to be
 broken in pieces by the jostle of a thousand acci-
 dents; every thing can lie in wait for us, and lurk
 privily for our lives. Men think it such an act of
 power to kill a man; whereas nothing is so easy. A
 man may be killed by another's kindness, as soon as
 by thy hatred; by his own excessive love, or joy,
 or hope, as well as by thy malice; so that it is no
 such

such instance or argument of power, "to be able
"to kill the body." SERM.
CCL.

4. The killing of the body does not necessarily signify any great mischief or harm in the issue and event. "They can kill the body," that is, they can knock off our fetters, and open the prison doors, and set us at liberty; they can put us out of pain, thrust us out of an uneasy world, put an end to our sins and sorrows, to our misery and fears; they can "give the weary rest," and send us thither where we would be, but are loth to venture to go; they can hasten our happiness, and make way for the more speedy accomplishment of our desires, and dispatch us to heaven sooner than otherwise we should get thither; they can kill us in the cause of God, and in the discharge of our duty; that is, they can add to our happiness, and brighten our crown, and increase the weight of our glory.

5. "They can but kill the body," when they have done that, they may give over, "here their proud waves must stop;" here their cruelty and malice, their power and wit must terminate, for they can reach no farther. When they have done all they can, they cannot annihilate us, they cannot make an utter end of us. As for the soul, they cannot come at that to do it any harm, neither the ax, nor the sword, nor the spear, nor the nail, nor any other instrument can wound or pierce it: and as for the body, though they wound it, and bruise it, and mangle it, yet they cannot turn it into nothing; though they may banish life from it, and make it a vile and loathsome carcase, yet they cannot command it out of being, it will still maintain it-

SERM. self under one form or other, and after it is killed,
 CCL. defy any thing more that can be done to it.

6. "They can but kill the body," they cannot do the least harm to the soul, much less can they annihilate it, and make it cease to be, they cannot torment it, they cannot with all their instruments of cruelty reach and touch the spirit of a man; they cannot throw stings into the conscience, and fill our minds with anguish and horror; nor can they make us torment ourselves by the racking of our own thoughts; they cannot create guilt in our minds, nor animate against us that never-dying worm, nor cast despairing thoughts, nor cause self-condemning and furious reflexions in our minds; nothing of all this are they able to do.

7. and lastly, "They can but kill the body," that is, they can but inflict temporal misery upon us; their power as it is but small, so it is of a short continuance, it reacheth no farther than this life, it is confined to this world; so that what mischief men would do us, they must do it quickly, "while we are in the way." There is no plot or device, nor cruelty, can be practised upon us "in the grave whither we are going." They cannot slay the dead, nor can their malice overtake those that are gone down into the pit; the longest arm, and the most inveterate hatred cannot reach those that are got out of the land of the living. Our most powerful and deadly enemies cannot follow us beyond the grave, and pursue us into the other world. Thus Job elegantly describes the happy state of the dead, that they are out of the reach of all evil and disquiet, Job iii. 17, 18, 19. speaking of the grave,
 "there

“ there the wicked cease from troubling ; and there
“ the weary be at rest. There the prisoners rest to-
“ gether, they hear not the voice of the oppressor.
“ The small and great are there, and the servant
“ is free from his master.” Thus you see what the
power of man is, and what the effects of it, what is
the worst that he can do to us ; and consequently
how much he is to be feared and regarded. I pro-
ceed to the

SERM.

CCL.

Second thing I propounded to speak to, namely,
how much the power of GOD exceeds the power of
man ; which our SAVIOUR declares in these words,
“ Who after he hath killed, hath power to cast in-
“ to hell.”

Which in general signifies, that his power is in-
finite and unlimited. GOD cannot only do what man
can do, but infinitely more ; his power is not con-
fined to the body, but he hath power over the spirit ;
he cannot only make body and soul miserable in this
world, but in the other ; not only for a time, but to
all eternity.

More particularly, in these words you have im-
plied all those advantages which the power of GOD
hath above the power of man. Not to insist upon
that, which yet the text takes notice of, that GOD
can do all that man can do ; “ he can kill the
“ body,” which is implied in these words, “ after
“ he hath killed.” He can blast our reputation, and
ruin our estate, and afflict our bodies with the
sharpest pains, and smite us with death. And GOD
doth all that with ease, which men many times do
with great labour and endeavour ; they are glad
to use the utmost of their wit and power and con-
trivance to do us mischief ; but GOD can do all

HERM. things by a word : if he do but speak, judgments
 CCL. come : we are but a little dust, and the least breath
 of God can dissipate us : he hath all creatures at
 his command, ready to execute his will. So that
 whatever man, or any creature can do, that God
 can : and infinitely more ; and this is that which I
 shall briefly open to you, wherein the power of God
 doth exceed the power of man, in these following
 particulars :

1. God's power is absolute, and independent
 upon any other ; not subject to be at any time
 checked and controuled by a superior power, be-
 cause there is none greater, none above it. " There
 " is a higher than the highest" upon earth, and
 one that may say to the greatest and proudest of
 the sons of men, " What dost thou ?" God can
 forbid any man to execute his purpose, when he is
 most firmly resolved and determined ; but when He
 hath a mind to manifest his power, he needeth not
 ask any man's leave. " Fear him that hath power,
 " ἐξουσίαν ἔχοντα, that hath authority ;" he hath an in-
 dependent power, and a sovereign right over the lives
 of men, because they are all his creatures, and when
 he will put forth his power, there is none can resist
 or challenge him. God did once force this acknow-
 ledgment from one of the greatest and proudest kings
 of the earth, Nebuchadnezzar, Dan. iv. 35. " He
 " doth according to his will in the armies of heaven,
 " and among the inhabitants of the earth, and none
 " can say unto him, what dost thou ?"

2. His power reacheth to the soul as well as the
 body. He can annihilate soul and body. He that
 brought all things into being by his word, can with
 as much ease make them vanish into nothing ; as " he
 " spake

“ spake the word, and they were made; so he can SERM.
“ command, and they shall not be.” By the least CCL.
breath of his mouth he can turn us into nothing;
nay, upon the very withdrawing of those influences
of his power and goodness, whereby we are main-
tained and supported in being, our bodies would va-
nish and “ fly away like a shadow, and our spirits
“ also would fail before him, and the souls which he
“ hath made.”

And as he can annihilate the souls of men, if he
please, so he can torment them. He that made our
souls and can make them happy, can likewise make
them miserable; for he is a SPIRIT, and hath
power over ours; he can “ shoot his arrows ” into
them, and make them “ stick fast ” there; he can
wound our souls with invisible darts, and fill our spi-
rits with secret anguish and amazement. When he
sends a sword without to destroy our bodies, he
can send terrors within to torment our minds; he
can “ distract us with terrors,” as David speaks,
Psal. lxxxviii. 15. nay, he can make us a terror to
ourselves, and by letting loose our thoughts upon us,
can make us more miserable, than all the tyrants in
the world can do, by the most exquisite torments;
and that in this life, as we see in the instance of
Francis Spira. When the “ father of spirits ” will
take us under correction, he can chastise us to pur-
pose, and make our own guilty consciences to sting
and lash us, and our minds to torture themselves by
furious reflexions upon themselves. All this God
can do in this life.

3. In the other world he can raise our bodies
again, and re-unite them to our souls, and cast them
into

SERM. into hell, and torment them there. This is that which
 CCL. St. Matthew calls “destroying body and soul in
 “hell.” And what the misery of that state shall be, the scripture in the general gives us an account, describing it to us by the greatest anguish, and the most sharp and sensible bodily torments, by “the worm that dies not,” that is, that guilt which shall eternally gnaw the consciences of sinners; and by “the fire which is not quenched,” that is, the everlasting pains of the body.

In the other world God will raise the bodies of wicked men, and reunite them to their souls, and cast them together into hell, to be tormented there; and this is that which is called “the second death:” and as tortured persons, when they are taken off the rack, have their joints new set, to be new racked again; so the bodies of wicked men shall be raised to a new life, that they may be capable of new pains.

This state of miserable men is set forth to us by the most sharp pains, and sensible torments; by the pain of burning, Matth. xxv. 41. “Depart ye “curfed into everlasting fire.” The rich man in the parable cried out, that he was “tormented in “flames;” and in the Revelations, the wicked are said, “to be cast into a lake fire of and brimstone.” Fire is the most active thing in nature, and brimstone the most combustible, to shew how quick and sharp the torment of sinners shall be; and it shall be universal, they shall be “cast into the lake,” their torments shall be sharp as that of burning, and as universal, as if they were drowned in flames. And to shew how great a sense they shall have of these sufferings, the scripture describes those who are condemned

demned to these hideous pains, lamenting, and wringing their hands, and “gnashing their teeth” for very anguish, Matth. xxiv. 51. “There shall be wailing and gnashing of teeth.” Thus the scripture represents to us the dismal state of the damned, possibly after this sensible manner, that it may accommodate things to our capacity; but to be sure, if these be not the very torments of hell, they shall be every whit as dreadful, as great as the terrors of God’s wrath, which ill men have laid up in store for themselves, can afford; and very probably they are of that nature, and so great as not to be capable of being fully described by any thing that we are now acquainted withal; for “who knows the power of God’s anger?” Who can imagine the worst that omnipotent justice can do to sinners? As the glory of heaven and joys of God’s presence are now inexplicable to us, so likewise are the torments of hell, and the miseries of the damned. “Eye hath not seen, nor ear heard, nor have entered into the heart of men,” those dreadful things which “God hath laid up for them that hate him.”

4. Which is the most dreadful consideration of all, God can punish for ever. The wrath of man is but a blast, a storm that is soon over; all misery and torments that men can inflict expire with this life: but the miserable effects of the divine displeasure extend themselves to all eternity. For this reason the judgment of God is called “an eternal judgment,” Heb. vi. 2. because the sentence which shall then be passed upon men, shall assign them to an eternal state; and the punishment that in pursuance of this sentence shall be inflicted upon sinners, is called “an everlasting punishment,” Matth. xxv. 46. and the instru-

SERM.
CCL.

SERM. instruments of their torment are said to be everlasting, Matth. xxv. 41. it is called "everlasting fire." CCL. And Mark ix. 44, 48. you have it there three times repeated, "where the worm dies not, and the fire is not quenched." The smoke of the bottomless pit is said to ascend "for ever and ever," Rev. xiv. 5. and Rev. xx. 10, it is said that, "the wicked shall be tormented day and night, for ever and ever," without intermission and without end.

It must needs be then, as the apostle says, Heb. x. 31. "A fearful thing to fall into the hands of the living God," that is, the God that lives for ever: because he that lives for ever, can punish for ever. And this is that which makes the great difference between the effects of the wrath of man, and the displeasure of God; the wrath of man and the effects of it, are but for a moment; but the effects of God's displeasure extend themselves to all eternity.

By these particulars which I have briefly gone over, you may see who is the great object of our fear; and when you have calculated the difference between God and man, you will find that there is no proportion between the impotency of man, and the omnipotency of God, between those evils that men can inflict upon us, and "the terrors of the Lord," and consequently what great reason we have to be afraid of offending God, and transgressing our duty in any kind, to avoid any temporal danger and inconvenience. But I shall not now enter upon the application of this serious and weighty argument.

S E R M O N CCLI.

The reasonableness of fearing God more
than man.

LUKE xii. 4, 5.

*And I say unto you, my friends, be not afraid of them
that kill the body, and after that have no more that
they can do. But I will forewarn you whom ye
shall fear: fear him, which after he hath killed,
hath power to cast into hell, yea, I say unto you, fear
him.*

I Proceed now to apply this serious and weighty SERM.
argument, and to draw some useful inferences CCLI.
from it.

I. That religion doth not design to annihilate and
root out our passions, but regulate and govern them; The se-
cond ser-
mon on
this text.
it does not wholly forbid and condemn them, but
determine them to their proper objects, and ap-
points them their measures and proportions; it does
not intend to extirpate our affections, but to exer-
cise and employ them aright, and to keep them
within bounds. Religion does not aim to extirpate
our love, and joy, and hope, and fear; but to pu-
rify and direct them, telling us how we should love
God with the highest and most intense degree of
affection, as the supreme good deserves, “with all
“our hearts, and with all our souls, and with all
“our minds, and with all our strength,” and other
things

SERM. things only in subordination to him. Religion re-
 CCLI. fines our joy and delight from the dregs of sensual
 pleasure, raising them to better objects, requiring us
 “ to rejoice in the LORD evermore, and to rejoice
 “ that our names are written in heaven ;” it raiseth
 our hopes above the favour of men, and tells us whom
 we should fear above all, the great and terrible God,
 whose power is infinitely above the power of men.
 Now that which propounds objects to our passions,
 and sets bounds to them, did never intend the utter
 extirpation of them ; but this religion doth.

II. We may infer likewise from hence, that it is
 not against the genius of true religion, to urge
 men with arguments of fear. No man can imagine
 there would have been so many fearful threatenings
 in scripture, and especially in the gospel, if it had
 not been intended they should have some effect and
 influence upon us. Some look upon all arguments
 of fear as legal, and gendering to bondage, as con-
 trary to the genuine spirit and temper of the gospel ;
 and look upon preachers, who urge men with con-
 siderations taken from the justice of God, and
 “ the terrors of the LORD,” as of an unevangelical
 spirit, as “ the children of the bondwoman, and not
 “ of the free,” as those who would bring men
 back again to mount Sinai, to “ thunder and light-
 “ ening, to blackness, and darkness, and tempest :”
 but will such men allow our SAVIOUR, and his
 apostles to have been evangelical preachers ? If so,
 it is not contrary to the gospel to use arguments of
 terror ; they thought them very proper to deter men
 from sin, and to bring them to repentance. Acts
 xvii. 30, 31. “ But now commandeth all men every
 “ where to repent : because he hath appointed a
 “ day,

“ day, in the which he will judge the world in righteousness.” And the same apostle tells us, that one principal thing which made the gospel so powerful for the salvation of men, was the terrible threatenings of it, because “ therein the wrath of God is revealed from heaven, against all ungodliness and unrighteousness of men,” Rom. i. 16. And 2 Cor. v. 10. the apostle puts christians in mind of the judgment of CHRIST, “ we must all stand before the judgment seat of CHRIST.” And lest any should doubt whether this were a proper argument to work upon christians under the gospel, he tells us, that he mentioned it for this very purpose, verse 11. “ knowing therefore the terrors of the LORD, we persuade men.”

SERM.

CCLI.

Some are so tender, that they cannot bear any other arguments but such as are taken from the free grace of God, and the free love of CHRIST. If we mention to them the wrath of God, and the torments of hell, we grate upon them : but if we consider the primitive preaching of CHRIST and his apostles, and will be concluded by their pattern, we must allow the necessity and usefulness of these arguments.

And indeed, if we consider the nature and reason of things, nothing is more apt to work upon sinners, than arguments of fear. Hence it is that the wisdom of mankind hath thought fit to secure the observance of human laws by the fear of punishment. Fear is deeply rooted in our nature, and immediately flows from that principle of self-preservation which is planted in every man ; it is the most wakeful passion in the soul of man, and so soon as any thing that is dreadful and terrible is presented to

SERM. us, it alarms us to flee from it : and this passion doth
 CCLI. naturally spring up in our minds from the apprehen-
 sion of a deity, because the notion of a God doth in-
 clude in it the power and justice, both which are ter-
 rible to guilty creatures ; so that fear is intimate to
 our being, and God hath hid in every man's con-
 science, a secret awe and dread of his presence, of his
 infinite power and eternal justice.

Now fear being one of the first things that is im-
 printed upon us from the apprehension of a deity,
 it is that passion, which above all other gives the
 greatest advantage to religion, and is the easiest to
 be wrought upon. Hence the wise man does so
 often call “ the fear of the LORD, the beginning of
 “ wisdom,” because here usually religion begins, and
 first takes hold of this passion, Prov. xvi. 6. “ By
 “ the fear of the LORD men depart from evil.”
 Fear is a good sure principle, and one of the best
 guards and securities against sin ; other passions are
 fickle and inconstant, but we cannot shake off our
 fears, nor quit ourselves of them, so long as we be-
 lieve the reality of the object ; there will be fear
 and terror in a guilty conscience, so long as it be-
 lieves a holy, just, and omnipotent God, and that
 “ it is a fearful thing to fall into the hands of the
 “ living God.”

Other passions are more under the government of
 reason, as our love, and hope, and anger ; but fear
 is the most natural, and most deeply rooted in the
 sensitive nature, and therefore is common to us
 with all other creatures, who have any considerable
 degree of sense, or any other passion ; and we may
 observe those creatures, who scarce betray any other
 passion, to be fearful of danger, and to flee from it.

Now

Now fear having less to do with reason, the effects of it SERM.
are less to be hinder'd. All the reason in the world CCLI.
cannot command down our fears, unless the danger
be removed, or some probable way shewn of avoiding
or mastering it; and therefore arguments of fear are
great eloquence, and have a mighty force and
power of persuasion. "Knowing therefore the ter-
rors of the LORD, saith St. Paul, we persuade
men." One of the best sort of arguments to
fright men from sin, and to bring them to their
duty, are "the terrors of the LORD." These take
the fastest and surest hold of men, even of the most
obstinate and obdurate sinners; for arguments of love
and kindness will work but little upon such persons,
some ingenuity is required to be swayed by such
considerations; but the perversest creatures love
themselves, and may be wrought upon by arguments
of fear; so that it is agreeable both to the nature of
man and of religion, to propound such Arguments
to our consideration.

III. The fear of God is the best Antidote against
the fear of men. We are very apt to be awed by
men, and to start from our duty for fear of tem-
poral evils and sufferings. This fear seized upon
St. Peter, and made him deny his master. And where
the fear of men does not prevail so far, yet it will
many times make men shy and timorous in the
owning of religion in the times of danger. This
made Nicodemus to come to our SAVIOUR by
night, John iii. 2. So likewise "many of the ru-
lers who believed in CHRIST, durst not make
open confession of him, lest they should have
been put out of the synagogue," John xii. 42.
Some men that have good inclinations to the truth, and

SERM. are inwardly convinced of it, yet in times of danger
 CCLI. they love to be wise and cautious, they have an eye
 to a retreat, and are loth to venture too far. But
 if we give way to these fears, and suffer them to possess us, we shall be exposed to many temptations, and be liable to be seduced from our duty. So Solomon observes, Prov. xxix. 25. "The fear of man
 "bringeth a snare."

Now if we would cast out this fear of men, it must be by a greater fear, which is stronger and more powerful; and that is the fear of God. Isa. viii. 12, 13. "Neither fear ye their fear, nor be
 "afraid;" speaking of the fear of men, against which he prescribes this remedy, "sanctify the
 "LORD of hosts himself, and let him be your
 "fear, and let him be your dread." If GOD be once the object of our fear, and we be thoroughly possessed with awful apprehensions of him, the frowns of men, and the wrath and displeasure of the greatest upon earth will signify nothing to us. This preserved Moses amidst all the temptations of a court, Heb. xi. 27. "He feared not the wrath of the
 "king: for he endured, as seeing him who is invisible." He could easily bear the anger of Pharaoh, when by faith he beheld the omnipotent justice of "the king immortal and invisible."

IV. If GOD be infinitely more to be dreaded than men, then "who is to be obeyed, GOD or men?" "judge ye." I speak not this to diminish our reverence to magistrates, and their authority; for by persuading men to fear GOD, who commands obedience to magistrates, we secure their reverence and authority; but when the commands of men are contrary to GOD's, and come in competition with them,

them, shall we not hearken to him, who is supreme, SERM. CCLI.
the greatest and most powerful? Shall we not obey

him who hath the most unquestionable authority over us, and right to command us? Shall we not dread him most, who is to be feared above all; who can be the best friend, and the worst enemy, is able to give the greatest rewards to our obedience, and to revenge himself upon us for our disobedience by the most dreadful and severe punishments? The great Socrates, when he was accused by the Athenians, for corrupting and seducing the youth of Athens by his philosophy, makes this generous defence for himself, more like an apostle, than a philosopher, "That he believed this province was committed to him by God, that he was called by him to this employment, to endeavour to reform the world; and therefore for him to forsake his station for fear of death, or of any other temporal evil, would be a most grievous sin." And afterwards (as Plato gives us the account of it) he says, "I am not afraid to die; but this I am afraid of, to disobey the commands of my superior, and to desert the station he hath placed me in, and to give over the work which he hath appointed me; and therefore, says he, if you will dismiss me upon these conditions, that I would forbear for the future to instruct the people, and if after this I be found so doing, I should be put to death; if I might be released upon these terms, I would not accept them, I would thank you for your good-will, but this I must affirm to you, that I ought to obey God rather than you; and so long as I have breath, I will never give over exhorting and teaching the people, and incul-

SERM. "cating the precepts of philosophy upon every one
CCLI. "I meet with."

Could a Heathen, who had but very obscure apprehensions of the rewards of another life, in comparison of what Christians have by the revelation of the gospel, could he take up this brave resolution, and die in it? Did he with so much constancy despise the wrath and reproaches of men, and with so much chearfulness entertain death, rather than to flinch from his duty? How does this upbraid the cowardice of many christians, who are so easily deter'd from their duty. and are apt to quit their religion for fear of sufferings? Since "life and immortality" is brought to light by the gospel, and the wrath "of God is so clearly revealed from heaven," what a folly it is for any man "to choose iniquity rather than affliction," as the expression is in Job; and to forfeit the favour of God, for the friendship of the world?

The fear of men will not be a sufficient plea and excuse for men at the day of judgment; it will not then be enough to say, this I was awed into by the apprehension of such a danger, by the fear of such sufferings; to avoid such an inconvenience, I knowingly committed such a sin; for fear of being persecuted, I violated my conscience, and chose rather to trust God with my soul, than men with my estate; to save my life, I renounced my religion, was "ashamed of CHRIST, and denied him before men." Our SAVIOUR hath told us plainly, that this will not serve us at the great day, Mark viii. 38. "Whosoever therefore shall be "ashamed of me, and of my words, in this adulterous and sinful generation, of him also shall
" the

“ the SON of man be ashamed, when he cometh SERM.
“ in the glory of his FATHER with the holy CCLI.
“ angels.” And Rev. xxi. 8, in that catalogue of
sinners which shall be “ cast into the lake of fire
“ and brimstone,” the fearful and unbelievers are
particularly mentioned.

And indeed they who out of fear of men offend
GOD, are guilty of this unreasonable folly, they
incur the danger of a greater evil, to avoid a less,
and to save their estates or their lives, they plunge
themselves into hell; whilst they are endeavouring
to escape the hands of “ men that shall die, they
“ fall into the hands of the living GOD.”

Lastly, if GOD be the great object of our fear,
let all impenitent sinners represent to themselves
“ the terrors of the LORD, and the power of his
“ anger.” This consideration, if any thing in the
world will do it, will awaken them to a sense of the
danger of their condition, and of the fatal issue of
a wicked life. Were but men possessed with due
apprehensions of the power of GOD; the fear of
men, and what they can do to us, would have no
influence upon us, in comparison of the fears of divine
vengeance. Were we sensible what it is to dis-
please GOD, “ in whose hands our breath is, and
“ whose are all our ways,” who can make us as
miserable, as we are capable of being, and more
miserable than we can now imagine, not only in
our bodies, but in our souls, not only in this world,
but in the other; not only for a time, but without
end? would not this make us afraid to offend and
displease him?

Can any consideration be more powerful to re-
strain us from sin, and to argue us to repentance

SERM. and obedience, than this? We may oppose the eternal displeasure of God, not only to all “the pleasures of sin,” but to all “the terrors of sense,” which are “but for a moment.” When men would allure us to sin by the baits and temptations of pleasure, or discourage and deter us from our duty by the threatnings of danger and sufferings: let us oppose to these the anger of the great God, and the infinite treasures of his wrath; and the serious thoughts of this will blunt the edge of all temptations, and quench all motives and incentives to sin.

Do we fear the wrath of man, whose power is short, and “whose breath is in his nostrils,” who can but afflict a little, and for a little while; and is not the wrath of the eternal God much more dreadful? Is not “destruction from the LORD,” a terror to thee? Dost thou fear man that shalt die, and the “son of man that shall be made as grass?” and dost thou stand in no awe of “him who lives for ever?” Is the fear of men so prevalent upon us, and shall not “the terrors of the LORD” have a much greater effect upon us? God is the supreme, and indeed the only object of our fear, in comparison of whom, nothing else is to be dreaded, Psal. lxxvi. 7. “Thou, even thou art to be feared; and “who may stand in thy sight, when once thou art “angry?” And Psal. xc. 11. “Who knoweth the “power of thine anger? as is thy fear, so is thy “wrath.” No passion in the soul of man is more infinite and unbounded than our fear, it is apt to fill our minds with endless jealousies and suspicions of what may befall us, of the worst that may happen: but if we should extend our fears to the utmost of what our wild and affrighted imaginations can reach to,

to, they could not exceed the greatness of GOD's SERM.
wrath; "As is thy fear, so is thy wrath." CCLI.

Let us then consider things impartially, and fear him most who hath the greatest power, and consequently whom of all other persons in the world it is most dangerous to offend. Let us set before us God and men; the single death of the body, and the forest and most sensible torments of body and soul together; temporal afflictions and sufferings, and eternal pains and sorrows: and when we are apt "to fear what men can do unto us," let us consider how much more he can do, "to whom power belongs," if for fear of men we will venture to provoke him. When men threaten us with a prison; let us think of "the chains of darkness:" when they would terrify us with fire and faggot; let us think of "the lake which burns with fire and brimstone:" when we are threatned with banishment; let us consider how great a misery it will be to be banished from the glorious and blissful presence of God for ever; when the danger of a temporal death is presented to us; let us remember "the worm that never dies, and the fire that is not quenched."

Ye that are so bold as to offend God, and affront the Almighty to his face, by prophane blasphemies, and impudent impiety, consider what ye do, how great a danger you run upon, to what fearful misery you expose yourselves, whenever you thus offend him; think of that question of the apostle, and answer it if you can; "Will ye provoke the LORD to jealousy? are ye stronger than he?" Take warning on this side hell, while ye may escape it; "flee from the wrath which is to come," while it is

SERM. is yet to come, before it overtake you, and there
 CCLI. be no escaping.

And let it not be grievous to us, to be put in mind of these terrible things. How much easier is it now to hear of them, while they may be avoided, than to endure them hereafter, when they will be both unavoidable and intolerable? and look upon them as the best and most faithful friends, who deal plainly with you in these matters, and acquaint you with the true state of things, and tell you nothing but what you will certainly find true, if you persist in this dangerous course of offending God: who represent things to you as they are, and forwarn you of so great and certain a danger.

It is no pleasure to any man to speak of such dreadful and tragical things; it can be no delight to fright men, and to grate upon their ears with such harsh and unwelcome words: but it is necessary to the greatest part of sinners, to set their danger before them in the most terrible and frightful manner; and all this little enough to awaken the greatest part of mankind to due consideration of their ways. Soft words, and sober reason, and calm arguing, will work upon some persons; some sinners are more yielding, and may be taken in upon parley; but others are so obstinate and resolved, that they are not to be carried but by storm; and in this case violence is the greatest act of friendship and kindness. Our SAVIOUR, when he spake these terrible words to his disciples, and gave them this warning, does insinuate, that it proceeded from a most sincere and hearty friendship to them,
 “ And I say unto you, my friends, Be not afraid
 “ of them that kill the body, and after that have

“ no

“ no more that they can do : but I will forewarn
“ you whom ye shall fear, &c.”

S E R M O N CCLII.

The efficacy of prayer, for obtaining
the HOLY SPIRIT.

LUKE xi. 13.

*How much more shall your heavenly Father give the
HOLY SPIRIT to them that ask him?*

THE great advantages which we have by SERM.
CCLII.
the christian religion, are these three :

1. A more perfect rule for the direction The first
sermon on
this text.
of our lives.

2. A more powerful assistance to enable us to the
performance of our duty. And,

3. The assurance of a glorious and an eternal reward.

And all these are contained in that excellent sermon of our blessed SAVIOUR upon the mount ; of which this passage in St. Luke is a part ; altho' it was spoken here by our SAVIOUR upon another occasion, and at another time.

Our SAVIOUR begins that sermon with the last of these, as being the great motive and encouragement to our duty, the promise of blessedness, and of a great reward in heaven.

And then he lays down the rule, which was the substance of those moral duties, which are contained in the law and the prophets ; only he explains and
sup-

SERM. supplies whatever was obscure and defective before,
 CCLII. and thereby brings our duty to a greater certainty,
 and clearness, and perfection than it had before.

But because this would have signified little to us, if we be still unable to perform our duty, and to obey that law which God hath given us, and to the obedience whereof he hath promised so great a reward; therefore that nothing might be wanting to excite and encourage our obedience, our blessed SAVIOUR, after he had made our duty as strict as possible, lest we should faint, and be discouraged under an apprehension of the impossibility, or extreme difficulty of performing what he requires of us, is pleased to promise an assistance equal to the difficulty of our duty, and our inability of ourselves to perform it; knowing that we are without strength, and that nothing is a greater discouragement to men from attempting any thing, than an apprehension that they have not sufficient strength to go thro' with it, not being able of themselves alone to do it, and despairing of assistance from any other.

And this is the great discouragement that most men lie under, as to the business of religion; they are conscious to themselves of their own weakness, and not sufficiently persuaded of the divine assistance: like the lame man in the gospel, that lay at the pool of Bethesda to be healed; he was not able to go in himself, and none took that pity of him as to help him in.

Hence it comes to pass, that a great many are disheartned from engaging in the ways of religion, because some spies, those who have only taken a superficial view of religion, have brought up an evil report upon that good land, which they pretend to

have

have searched, saying, as they of old did, when they returned from searching the land of Canaan, Numb. xiii. 31, 32, 33. “ We be not able to go up against the people, for they are stronger than we: and they brought up an evil report of the land which they had searched, unto the children of Israel, saying, The land thorow which we have gone to search it, is a land that eateth up the inhabitants thereof, and all the people that we saw in it, are men of a great stature. And there we saw the giants, the sons of Anak, which come of the giants: and we were in our own sight as grasshoppers, and so we were in their sight.” Just thus we are apt to misrepresent religion to ourselves, as if the difficulties of it were insupportable, and the enemies which we are to encounter were infinitely too strong for us: not considering that “ the LORD is with us,” and notwithstanding our own impotency and weakness, yet by his strength we may be (as St. Paul expresseth it) “ more than conquerors.”

Therefore to remove this discouragement, and to put life into the endeavours of men, our blessed SAVIOUR assures us that GOD is ready to assist us, and to supply our weakness and want of strength by a power from above, even by giving us his HOLY SPIRIT, which is “ a SPIRIT of might, and of power, and of the fear of the LORD,” as he is called by the prophet; and he is ready to bestow so great a gift upon us on the easiest terms and conditions imaginable; if we will but ask this blessing of him. “ How much more shall your heavenly FATHER give the HOLY SPIRIT to them that ask him?”

“ How

SERM.

CCLII.

“How much more?” which words are an argument from the less to the greater, by which our SAVIOUR, from the confidence which children naturally have in the goodness of their earthly parents, that they will not deny them things necessary and convenient for them, if they earnestly beg them at their hands, argues christians into a great confidence of the good-will of their heavenly FATHER, and of his readiness “to give his HOLY SPIRIT to them that ask him.”

The force of which argument depends upon a double comparison; of the quality of the persons giving; and of the nature of the gift.

1. The quality of the persons giving, “fathers upon earth, and our heavenly FATHER.” If earthly fathers be naturally disposed to give good things to their children, how much more may we believe this of our heavenly FATHER; if they who are but men have so much goodness; how much more confidently may we presume it of God, who excels in all perfections, and whose goodness excels all his other perfections? If they who are evil, that is, many times envious, and ill-natured, and at the best, but imperfectly good; how much more God, who is infinitely good, and even goodness itself? If they who are many times indigent, or but meanly provided of the good things they bestow, and if they give them to their children, must want them themselves; how much more God, who is not the less rich and full for the overflowings of his bounty, and can never impair his estate, nor impoverish himself by conferring of his blessings and benefits upon others?

2. If

2. If we compare the nature of the gifts. If SERM. CCLII.
earthly parents that are evil, be ready to bestow
good things upon their children, things necessary
and convenient only for their bodies and this life;
how much more confidently may we believe the good
God inclined to bestow upon his children the best
things, things necessary for their souls, and condu-
cing to their eternal life and happiness?

So that in the handling of these words, I shall

First, endeavour to shew what is comprehended in
this gift of the HOLY SPIRIT, and how great a
blessing and benefit it is.

Secondly, what kind of asking is here required.

Thirdly, to confirm and illustrate the truth of this
proposition, that God is very ready to give the HOLY
SPIRIT to them that ask him.

Fourthly, to remove a considerable objection to
which this discourse may seem liable. And,

Fifthly, to make some practical application of it
to ourselves.

First, I shall shew what is comprehended in this
gift of the HOLY SPIRIT, and how great a
blessing and benefit it is. St. Matthew expresseth
this somewhat differently, chap. vii. 11. "How
much more shall your FATHER which is in hea-
ven give good things to them that ask him?"
Which, compared with the expression here in St. Luke,
doth intimate to us that the SPIRIT of God is
the chief of blessings, or rather the sum of all good
things. The promise here in the text is not ex-
press'd so generally as it is in St. Matthew; but our
evangelist instanceth in the greatest gift that God
can bestow upon his children; the gift of his HOLY
SPIRIT, which is indeed the chief of all other,
the

SERM.
CCLII.

the sum and comprehension of all spiritual blessings; for it contains in it the presence and residence, the continual influence and assistance of God's HOLY SPIRIT upon the minds of men, together with all the blessed fruits and effects of it, in the sanctifying and renewing of our hearts, in all those particular graces and virtues, which are in scripture called "the fruits of the SPIRIT; in righteousness, and peace, and joy in the HOLY GHOST, in sealing us up to the day of redemption," and in being a pledge of our future inheritance, and of a blessed resurrection to eternal life. All these are mentioned in scripture, as the fruits and effects of God's HOLY SPIRIT, and therefore it will come within the compass of this promise concerning the gifts of God's SPIRIT; "how much more shall your heavenly FATHER," &c.

And which I desire may be especially considered, because it will conduce very much to the clearing of some difficulties in my following discourse, by the gift of God's HOLY SPIRIT, is not only meant the common and transient operations of God's SPIRIT upon the minds of men, exciting and disposing them to that which is good; (for thus the SPIRIT was given to men in all ages from the beginning of the world) but the special presence and residence, the permanent and continued influence and conduct of God's HOLY SPIRIT, as a constant and powerful principle of spiritual life and activity in good men; in which sense the scripture tells us, that the HOLY GHOST resides and dwells in believers, that they "live in the SPIRIT, and walk in the SPIRIT, and are led by the SPIRIT:" for this phrase of

"the

“ the giving of the HOLY GHOST, or of God’s ^{SERM.}
“ SPIRIT,” does always (I think) in the new ^{CCLII.}
testament, signify either the miraculous and extra-
ordinary gifts conferred upon the apostles and pri-
mitive christians, in order to the effectual planting
and propagating of the gospel, and so it is used
Acts v. 32. where St. Peter says, that “ the HOLY
“ GHOST, whom God had given to them that
“ obey him, was a witness of the resurrection and
“ ascension of our SAVIOUR,” that is, gave testi-
mony and confirmation thereto : or else for the spe-
cial residence, and continual influence and assistance
of God’s HOLY SPIRIT in and upon the minds
of good men. And so we find this phrase frequently
used, Rom. v. 5. “ The love of God is shed abroad
“ in our hearts, by the HOLY GHOST which is
“ given unto us ;” meaning for the strengthening
and assistance of believers to all patience and long-
suffering under the persecutions which attended them ;
for so the apostle reasons, “ we glory in tribula-
“ tion, knowing that tribulation worketh patience,
“ and patience experience, and experience hope, and
“ hope maketh not ashamed, because the love of
“ God is shed abroad in our hearts, by the HOLY
“ GHOST which is given unto us ;” that is, for
our support and assistance under sufferings. So like-
wise, 1 Theff. iv. 8. where defiling of our bodies by
lust, is called “ a despising of God, who hath given
“ unto us his HOLY SPIRIT ;” that is, to dwell
in us ; for which reason the same apostle calls our
bodies “ the temples of the HOLY GHOST, and of
“ God,” 1 Cor. iii. 16. “ Know ye not that ye are
“ the temple of God, and that the SPIRIT of God
“ dwelleth in you.” And chap. xvi. 19. “ Know
“ ye

SERM. "ye not that your body is the temple of the HOLY
CCLII. "GHOST which is in you."

And 1 John iii. 24. GOD is said to give us his SPIRIT to enable us to keep his commandments; "he that keepeth his commandments, dwelleth in him, and he in him: and hereby we know that he abideth in us, by the SPIRIT which he hath given us." And, chap. iv. 13. "Hereby we know that we dwell in him, and he in us, because he hath given us of his SPIRIT." So that the gift of GOD's SPIRIT doth imply his continual residence in good men; and his powerful assistance of them to all the purposes of holiness and obedience; and not only a transient operation upon the minds of men, by some good motions and suggestions, which is common to bad men, and those who are in a sinful and unregenerate state.

Secondly, we shall in the next place consider, what kind of asking, in order to the obtaining of this great blessing, is here required by our SAVIOUR, when he says, "GOD will give his HOLY SPIRIT to them that ask him." It must have these three qualifications:

1. It must be hearty and sincere, in opposition to formal and hypocritical asking.
2. It must be earnest, and fervent, and importunate, in opposition to cold, and faint, and careless asking.
3. It must be in faith, and a confident assurance that GOD will hear us, in opposition to doubting and distrust.

1. It must be hearty and sincere, in opposition to formal and hypocritical asking. When we pray for GOD's grace, and HOLY SPIRIT, we must not be

be as the hypocrites are, who pray not so much to SERM.
be heard of God, as to be seen of men; who have CCLII.
no sense of their wants, no hearty desires to obtain
those blessings, which they beg of God, but only pray
out of form and custom, or for ostentation of their
piety and devotion. It is not every prayer that is
put up to God out of form and custom that will
prevail with God, for the assistance of his grace
and HOLY SPIRIT; but it must be serious and in
good earnest, it must proceed from a true and real
sense of our need of God's HOLY SPIRIT; such a
sense as children have of their want of bread, when
they are pinched with hunger.

2. This asking must be earnest, and fervent, and
importunate, in opposition to cold, and faint, and
indifferent asking; because this declares the sincerity
of our desires. Those things which we are careless
and indifferent about, and do not much matter whe-
ther we have them or not, we ask them coldly, and
but seldom; if they be not granted at the first ask-
ing, we give them over, and look no farther after
them: but those things which we heartily desire,
and are truly sensible of our want of them, we will
use more earnestness and importunity for the obtain-
ing of them; and if we cannot obtain them at first,
we will renew our requests, be instant and urgent
for them, and if there be any hopes, never give over
till we have prevailed.

And that in this manner we ought to beg of
God his HOLY SPIRIT, our SAVIOUR de-
clares in those metaphors which he useth of asking,
and seeking, and knocking, which signify earnest-
ness, and diligence, and importunity, ver. 9, 10.

“ I say unto you, ask, and it shall be given you :

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R

“ seek,

SERM. “ seek, and ye shall find : knock, and it shall be
 CCLII. “ opened unto you. For every one that asketh, re-
 “ ceiveth : and he that seeketh, findeth : and to
 “ him that knocketh, it shall be opened.” And we
 have this more plainly declared in the parable before
 the text, ver. 5, 6, 7, 8. “ And he said unto them,
 “ which of you shall have a friend, and shall go
 “ unto him at midnight, and say unto him, friend,
 “ lend me three loaves : for a friend of mine in his
 “ journey is come to me, and I have nothing to
 “ set before him : and he from within shall answer
 “ and say, trouble me not, the door is now shut,
 “ and my children are with me in bed, I cannot
 “ rise, and give thee. I say unto you, though he
 “ will not rise, and give him, because he is his
 “ friend : yet because of his importunity, he will
 “ rise, and give him as many as he needeth.” If
 meer impudence and importunity in asking, will
 prevail so much with men, what will not humble
 and constant supplication obtain from God ? And
 so our SAVIOUR applies this familiar parable, that
 in like manner we should be importunate with God
 for spiritual blessings, and as it were give him no
 rest, till we obtain what we ask, “ I say unto you,
 “ ask, and it shall be given you, &c.” Not that
 meer importunity prevails with God : but as it is
 an expression of a just sense of our wants, and of a
 confident persuasion of God’s goodness, so it is
 effectual to procure the greatest blessings at God’s
 hands.

3. We must ask in faith, and a confident assu-
 rance that God will hear us, in opposition to
 doubting and distrust ; with the same, nay with
 greater confidence and assurance than children come

to

to their earthly parents, to ask those things of them SERM.
CCLII.
that are most necessary for them. And this con-
dition or qualification of our prayers our SAVI-
OUR doth elsewhere frequently require. Matth. xxi.

22. "All things whatsoever ye shall ask in prayer,
"believing, ye shall receive." And St. James,

chap. i. 5, 6. directing those who want spiritual
wisdom, to ask it of GOD, immediately subjoins,

"but let him ask in faith, nothing wavering;" that

is, not doubting but that GOD, to whom he addres-
seth his prayer, is both able and willing to give him

what he asks: and whoever comes to GOD, not
having this apprehension of him, "let him not

"think that he shall receive any thing of the LORD,

"ver. 7." For upon what ground does he expect

any thing from that person whom he looks upon
either as unable, or unwilling to grant his desires?

I proceed in the

Third place, to confirm and illustrate the truth
of this proposition, that GOD is very ready to give
the HOLY SPIRIT to them that ask him. And
for the proof of this, I shall only use two arguments;
from GOD's free promise and declaration; and from
the comparison which our SAVIOUR here useth in the
text.

1. From GOD's free promise and declaration.
And besides that here in the text, I might produce
several others, but I shall mention only one, which
is very plain and expref, and conceived in terms as
large and universal, as can well be devised. Jam. i.
5. "If any of you (says the apostle, speaking of
"christians) lack wisdom, let him ask it of GOD,
"that giveth to all men liberally, and upbraid-
"eth not; and it shall be given him." Where

SERM. by wisdom, according to St. James his notion of it,
 CCLII. are meant all "the fruits of the SPIRIT," all christian graces; for so he tells us, chap. iii. 17. that "the wisdom which is from above," that is, which is wrought by the divine SPIRIT, "is first pure, " then peaceable, gentle, and easy to be entreated, " full of mercy and of good fruits." Now if GOD have freely promised so great a blessing and benefit to men, if they earnestly beg it of him, we need not doubt of his faithfulness to perform and make good what he hath promised.

2. The other argument, which I shall principally insist upon, shall be from the comparison which our SAVIOUR here useth in the text, "if " a son shall ask bread of any of you that is a father, will he give him a stone?" This was a proverbial speech among the Jews, which seems from them to have been derived to the neighbour nations, as appears from that of Plautus, *alterâ manu fert lapidem, alterâ panem ostentat*, "he carries a stone in one hand, and holds forth bread " in the other;" "if a son shall ask bread of any " of you that is a father, will he give him a stone?" That is, if he ask that which is absolutely necessary, will he give him that which will do him no good; "or if he ask a fish, will he for a fish give him " a serpent; or if he ask an egg, will he offer him " a scorpion?" That is, if he ask that, which tho' it be not absolutely necessary, yet may be very convenient; will he give him that which is hurtful and pernicious? Hardly any earthly parent, though otherwise never so bad, would deal thus with his children; and can we suspect it of GOD? Certainly it is much farther from him to deny to us,

his

his children, those better and more necessary good SERM.
things, which we humbly and heartily and earnest- CCLII.
ly beg of him, in a confident persuasion of his good-
ness.

“If ye then being evil” (many times bad enough
in other respects, and at the best come infinitely short
of God in point of benignity and goodness) “know
“how to give good gifts unto your children; how
“much more shall your heavenly FATHER give the
“HOLY SPIRIT to them that ask him?”

This is a plain and undeniable argument, fitted to
all capacities, because it proceeds upon two supposi-
tions which every man must acknowledge to be true.

1. That earthly parents have generally such a na-
tural affection for their children, as does strongly
incline them to give them such good things, as are
necessary and convenient for them, and which will
not suffer them, instead of good things, to give them
such things as either are no wise useful, or any wise
hurtful to them; this is a matter of common, and
certain, and sensible experience, which no man can
deny.

2. The other supposition, which is as evident in
reason, as the former is in experience, is this, that
God is better than men, and that there is infinitely
more goodness in him, than in the best man in the
world, because goodness in its most exalted degree,
and highest perfection, is essential to that notion
which all men have of God; and this being a
common principle, in which men are universally
agreed, no man can gainsay it.

Now let but these two things be supposed, that
men, though otherwise evil, yet commonly have
so much of natural goodness and affection for their
children,

SERM. children, as to be ready to give them those things
 CCLII. which are good for them ; and that God is infinitely
 } more liberal and bountiful than men ; and it will ap-
 pear to be a thing highly credible, that this good
 God will not deny the best of gifts, even his HOLY
 SPIRIT, to them that ask him.

But for the farther illustration of this argument,
 we will consider a little more particularly the terms
 of the comparison which our SAVIOUR here useth ;
 our earthly, and our heavenly FATHER ; temporal
 and spiritual good things.

I. Our earthly and our heavenly FATHER, in
 which terms the givers are compared together. Now
 there are three considerations in a giver, which make
 him capable of being bountiful, and dispose him
 to it.

(1.) That he have wherewithal to be liberal, and
 can part with it, without damage and prejudice to
 himself.

(2.) That he be good-natur'd, and have a mind
 to give.

(3.) That he be related to those to whom he
 gives, and be concerned in their welfare. Now all
 these considerations are more eminently in God,
 and with far greater advantage than in any father
 upon earth. For,

(1.) God hath wherewithal to be liberal, and can
 confer what benefits he pleaseth, without any harm
 or prejudice to himself. Earthly parents cannot many
 times be so good to their children as they desire, be-
 cause they have it not to bestow, they cannot per-
 haps feed them plentifully without pinching them-
 selves, nor give them fit provision without impo-
 verishing themselves : but the divine nature is a per-
 petual

petual and inexhaustible spring of all good things, SERM.
even of more than he can communicate ; in him are CCLII.
all the treasures of riches, and power, and wisdom,
and he cannot by giving to others, ever empty or
impoverish himself ; when he makes the freest com-
munications of his goodness to his creatures, he does
not thereby diminish and lessen his native store.

(2.) God hath infinitely more goodness than
men, he hath stronger propensions and inclinations
to do good, than are to be found in the best na-
tured and most generous man in the world. All the
goodness that is in the creature, is derived from
God, who is the fountain and original of it, it is
but an imperfect image, and imperfect represen-
tation of that excellency and perfection which the
divine nature is possessed of in the highest degree
that can be imagined. Men are many times evil
and envious ; (for so the word signifies, “ If ye be-
“ ing evil, *πονεοι*, of an envious, niggardly, and
“ illiberal disposition)” but at the best men are of
a finite and limited goodness and perfection.

But now no such thing as envy and ill-will can
possibly happen to God, who is so rich in his own
native store, and so secure of the enjoyment of what
he hath, that he can neither hope for the enlarge-
ment, nor fear the impairing of his estate.

(3.) God hath a nearer and more intimate rela-
tion to us, than our earthly parents, and is more
concerned for our happiness. Our earthly parents
are but the “ fathers of our flesh,” as the apostle
speaks, Heb. xii. 9. but God is “ the father of
“ our spirits.” Nay, in respect of our very bo-
dies, God hath the greatest hand in framing of
us ; 'tis he who “ made us in secret, and curiously

SERM " wrought us in the lowest parts of the earth ; in
 CCLII. " his book all our members were written, which in
 " continuance were fashioned," Psal. cxxxix. 15,
 16. so that we being God's creatures, our bodies
 the work of his hands, and our souls the breath of
 his mouth, GOD is more our father, than he that
 begat us, and having a nearer and stronger relation
 to us, hath a greater care and concernment for our
 happiness.

So that if our earthly parents, who are many times
 indigent and ill-natured, and are but " the fathers
 " of our flesh," and that but as second causes in
 subordination to God, the principal author of our
 beings, I say, if they will " give good things to
 " their children ;" how much more shall our hea-
 venly FATHER, who is the fountain of all good,
 and goodness itself, who is our creator, the framer
 of our bodies, and " the father of our spirits,"
 be more ready to bestow on us the best things we
 can beg of him.

2. Let us compare likewise " temporal and spi-
 " ritual good things ;" in which terms you have
 the gifts compared together. Now there are two
 considerations belonging to a gift, which are apt to
 move and incline a person to bestow it ; if it be
 such as is necessary, or very convenient for the per-
 son on whom it is bestowed ; and if it be such as the
 person that bestows it takes great pleasure and de-
 light in the imparting of it.

(1.) If it be such as is necessary, or very conve-
 nient for those on whom it is bestowed. Such is bread
 which earthly parents give their children ; but that is
 only necessary to the body, and for the support of
 this frail and temporal life : but the HOLY SPIRIT

of GOD is necessary to the life and health of our SERM.
souls, to our eternal life and happiness. Now our CCLII.
soul being ourselves, and eternity the most considerable duration, GOD'S HOLY SPIRIT is consequently much more necessary and convenient for us, than any thing that our earthly parents can give us.

(2.) The SPIRIT of GOD is such a gift as he takes the greatest pleasure and delight in the imparting and bestowing of it. What can be more acceptable to GOD, than that his children should be made partakers of his own divine nature, and conformed to his image, than that we should be "holy" as GOD is holy, and renewed after the image "of him that hath created us in righteousness and true holiness?" than that human nature should be restored to its primitive perfection and dignity, and recovered to that state in which it came out of GOD's hands? than to see the ruin and decay of his own workmanship repaired; and his creatures, that were become miserable by the temptation of the devil, restored to happiness by the operation of the HOLY SPIRIT of GOD?

And this is the proper work of the SPIRIT of GOD upon the minds of men, to sanctify and renew us, and (as the apostle expresseth it) "to create us again unto good works, to make us partakers of his own holiness," and to restore our souls to that condition that "his soul may have pleasure in us." What can we imagine more acceptable to GOD, than that men should be brought to this happy state and temper? A child does not please his father so much when he desires to be instructed by him in learning and virtue, as we please GOD when we ask his HOLY SPIRIT of him:

SERM. for nothing can be more pleasing to him, than to be-
 CCLII. stow this best of gifts upon us.

So that the whole force of the argument comes to this, that if we believe that earthly parents have any good inclinations toward their children, and are willing to bestow upon them the necessaries of life, we have much more reason to believe that GOD our heavenly FATHER is much more ready “to give “his HOLY SPIRIT to them that ask him;” whether we consider the quality of the giver, or the nature of the gift.

I should now have proceeded to the other particulars which I propounded; but I shall only at present make some short reflexions upon what hath already been delivered.

What a comfortable consideration is this, to be so fully assured of GOD’s readiness to bestow all good things upon his children, and even his HOLY SPIRIT, if we ask it of him? and what an encouragement is here to constant and fervent prayer to GOD, who will not deny us the gift of his HOLY SPIRIT, if we heartily and earnestly beg it of him? and what an encouragement is here likewise to the resolutions and endeavours of a good life, that so powerful an assistance is so freely offer’d to us, to enable us to “run the ways of GOD’s commandments;” that GOD hath promised his HOLY SPIRIT to reside and dwell in us, to be a principle of spiritual life to us, and to enable us to all the purposes of obedience and a holy life?

And what infinite cause have we to bless GOD for the gift of his HOLY SPIRIT, and to say with St. Paul, “Blessed be GOD for his unspeak-
 “able gift.” That he hath given his HOLY SPIRIT

to

to his church, at first in miraculous powers and gifts for the preaching of the christian religion in the world, and ever since in such degrees of assistance, as were necessary in the several ages of the church, for the preservation of the christian religion in the world; that he hath given his HOLY SPIRIT to every particular member of his church, for the sanctifying and renewing of our natures, “ to strengthen us to every good word and work, and “ to keep us by his mighty power through faith “ unto salvation ? ”

And this sanctifying virtue of the HOLY GHOST, enabling us to do the will of GOD, is more than any miraculous powers whatsoever. So our SAVIOUR tells us, Matth. vii. 21, 22, 23. “ Not every “ one that faith unto me, LORD, LORD, shall “ enter into the kingdom of heaven: but he that “ doth the will of my FATHER which is in heaven. Many will say to me in that day, LORD, “ LORD, have we not prophesied in thy name? “ and in thy name have cast out devils? and “ in thy name done many wonderful works? and “ then will I profess unto them, I never knew you: “ depart from me, ye that work iniquity.” Men may do wonders by the power of the HOLY GHOST, and yet be shut out of the kingdom of heaven; only they that are assisted by the SPIRIT of GOD to do the will of GOD shall be admitted into heaven.

And this is matter of greater joy and comfort to us, than to work the greatest wonders, and to have power over devils, to cast them out of the bodies of men, Luke x. 20. “ Rejoice not in this,” faith our blessed SAVIOUR, “ that the SPIRITS are made “ subject

“ subject to you, but rejoice in this, that your
 “ names are written in heaven.” How is that?
 the sanctifying virtue of GOD’S SPIRIT is the pledge
 and earnest of our heavenly inheritance, and that
 whereby we are “ sealed to the day of redemption.”

S E R M O N CCLIII.

The efficacy of prayer, for obtaining
 the HOLY SPIRIT.

LUKE xi. 13.

*How much more shall your heavenly Father give the
 HOLY SPIRIT to them that ask him?*

SERM.
CCLIII.

The se-
cond ser-
mon on
this text.

I N discoursing on these words, I propos’d,
 First, to endeavour to shew what is compre-
 hended in the gift of the HOLY SPIRIT men-
 tion’d in my text, and how great a blessing and be-
 nefit it is.

Secondly, what kind of asking is here requir’d.

Thirdly, to confirm and illustrate the truth of this
 proposition, that God is very ready to give the
 HOLY SPIRIT to them that ask him.

Fourthly, to remove a considerable objection, to
 which this discourse may seem liable. And,

Fifthly, to make some practical application of it
 to ourselves.

The three former of these I have dispatch’d, and
 shall now proceed to the

Fourth

Fourth thing which I propounded, which was to SERM.
remove an objection, to which this discourse may CCLIII.
seem liable ; the removal whereof will conduce very
much to the clearing of this argument. about which
men seem to have had very confused apprehen-
sions. The objection is this ; that none can ask
the SPIRIT aright, but they that have the
SPIRIT ; and if this be so, then this large decla-
ration of God's goodness and readiness to bestow
his HOLY SPIRIT upon them that ask him,
comes to nothing ; for a promise signifies nothing,
which confers a benefit on a person upon a condi-
tion impossible by him to be performed, unless he
first have the benefit which is promised ; and to
use a familiar comparison, if this were the mean-
ing of it, it would be like a father's jesting with his
child, when he is fallen, and bidding him come
to him, and he will help him up. Now if God
thus promise his HOLY SPIRIT to them that ask
it, with this reservation, that no man can ask God's
SPIRIT, unless he have it, then this promise a-
mounts to nothing.

And that no man can ask GOD'S SPIRIT,
without his SPIRIT, (that is, put up any prayer
that is acceptable to God, without the assistance of
God's SPIRIT) seems to me in effect generally
granted by those who assert, that no unregenerate
man can pray to God aright, or perform any
other duties of religion in an acceptable manner :
for to be unregenerate, and not to have the SPI-
RIT of God, are equivalent expressions in scrip-
ture, St. Paul having expressly told us, that " if
any man have not the SPIRIT of God, he is
" none

SERM. "none of his," that is, does not belong to him, as
 COLIII. every regenerate person most certainly does.

Besides that the scripture tells us, that all the prayers, and all the sacrifices, that is, all religious duties performed by a wicked man, are "an abomination to the LORD;" because no prayer can be acceptable to GOD, which does not proceed from sincerity, and is not put up to GOD in faith; now sincerity and faith are graces proper to the regenerate.

So that the objection in short is this, how can any man that hath not the SPIRIT of GOD, ask any thing of GOD aright, that is, sincerely, fervently, and in faith? And if without GOD'S SPIRIT, no man can beg his SPIRIT of him, what then signifies this promise, that "GOD will give his HOLY SPIRIT" to them that ask him?"

For the satisfaction of this objection, I shall lay down these propositions, which if they be well consider'd will conduce very much to the clearing of this matter.

First, that in the interpretation of promises and conditions annext to them, we ought above all things to take heed, that we do not so interpret either the promise, or condition, as to make the promise void, and of none effect; for this cannot be done without a notorious affront to him that made the promise, who is presumed, if he was serious and sincere, to have intended a real benefit and advantage by his promise. And this rule holds not only in the interpretation of promises, but of all covenants and contracts; *in omni interpretatione pactorum, contractuum, & promissorum, illud præcipue cavendum, ne*
 in

in vanum recidant ; “ in the interpretation of all co-
“ venants, and contracts, and promises, we are
“ principally to take care, that we do not so inter-
“ pret them as to make them signify nothing :”
and if this hold among men, much more ought we
to be cautious and tender of interpreting the pro-
mises of God to a vain and trifling sense ; for we
cannot dishonour the goodness and veracity of God
more, than to suppose that he mocks men by his
promises, and makes a shew and offer of a benefit,
when he really intends none ; for all such pro-
ceedings as would be unbecoming the sincerity and
integrity of a good man, are to be removed at the
greatest distance from God, “ all whose ways are
“ faithfulness and truth, who is not as man, that
“ he should lie, or as the son of man, that he should
“ repent.”

Secondly, I do not see but if this were the true
sense and meaning of these words of our SAVIOUR,
that though “ GOD will give the HOLY SPI-
“ RIT to them that ask him,” yet none but those
who have the SPIRIT of GOD, can ask it of
him, I say, I do not see but that it must necessa-
rily be granted, that such a promise as this amounts
to nothing ; because according to this interpretation
of it, the benefit promised would be suspended upon
a condition, which no man can perform, unless he
be first partaker of the benefit ; which is, in plain
English, to promise to bestow a thing upon a man
on this condition, that he first have the thing which
I promise to bestow upon him, which signifies just
nothing, but is lusory and trifling, and consequently
not to be imagined to be the meaning of a divine
promise. There cannot be a greater absurdity in
divinity,

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SERM. divinity, than to put such a sense upon the promises
 CCLIII. of God, as does plainly evacuate them, and make
 them of none effect. This be far from us, as the
 apostle says, upon another occasion, "shall we make
 " the promises of God of none effect? God for-
 " bid!"

And whereas it is commonly said, that the mean-
 ing of our SAVIOUR's promise here in the text is
 this, that those who have the SPIRIT of God
 already, if they ask a greater measure of it, he will
 not deny it to them; though this be true in itself,
 that God will not deny greater degrees of the
 grace and assistance of his HOLY SPIRIT to
 them that beg it of him, and may by a just parity
 of reason be inferred from this promise, or con-
 tained in it as part of the meaning of it, yet to
 make this the whole meaning of it, seems to be a
 very forc'd and unreasonable limitation of these ge-
 neral words, wherein this promise is conceived;
 for if we look back to the 10th verse, the words
 are as general as could well be devised, "every one
 " that asketh, receiveth; and every one that seek-
 " eth, findeth;" and containing matter of favour
 and benefit, they ought in reason to be enlarged
 and extended as far as may be, but by no means to
 be restrained without evident reason. Now so far
 is there from being any evident reason for this, that
 there seems to me to be an invincible one to the
 contrary, why they should not be thus restrained,
 and that is this. If this promise of our SAVI-
 OUR's were thus to be limited, then all other pro-
 mises of the like nature, ought in like manner to
 be interpreted; which cannot be without manifest
 violence, and self-contradiction. I will instance in

two other promises of the like nature and importance. The first is Ezek. xxxvi. 25, 26, 27. SERM.
CCLIII. God there promises to reclaim them from their idolatry; by convincing them of their sin, and giving them repentance, and his HOLY SPIRIT to regenerate and sanctify them, “then will I sprinkle clean water upon you, and ye shall be clean: from all your filthiness, and from all your idols will I cleanse you. A new heart also will I give you, and a new spirit will I put within you, and I will take the stony heart out of your flesh, and I will give you an heart of flesh. And I will put my SPIRIT within you, and cause you to walk in my statutes, and ye shall keep my judgments, and do them.” Now that which I would argue from hence, is this; those idolatrous Jews to whom God promises that he will cleanse them, and give them a new heart, and a new spirit, and put his SPIRIT into them, were as yet unregenerate, and consequently, as the objection supposeth, could not pray for these blessings, nor ask them of God in a right manner; and yet he suspends these blessings upon the condition of their praying for them, as is evident, ver. 37. “Thus saith the LORD GOD, I will yet be enquired of by the house of Israel, to do it for them.” From whence it is plain, that God would not bestow these blessings upon them, without their seeking to him for them. Now if these persons, because they were unregenerate, could not pray for these things, then these promises signified nothing; which is by no means to be imagined of the promises of God. So that it is clear, that the SPIRIT of God is here promised to the unregenerate, upon condition of

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SERM. their suing to GOD for it; and if so, there can be
 CCLIII. no reason to restrain the promise in the text, which
 is of the same nature, and made upon the same condition, to the regenerate only.

The other text I shall mention, is Jam. i. 5. "If
 " any of you lack wisdom, let him ask of GOD,
 " that giveth to all men liberally, and upbraideth
 " not; and it shall be given him." In which
 words, St. James, under the notion of wisdom (as
 I told you before) doth comprehend all the fruits of
 the SPIRIT, which are the effect of regeneration
 and sanctification. Now this promise being conceived
 in so general terms, cannot without manifest force
 and violence be restrained only to the regenerate:
 for then the promise should not have run thus, "if
 " any man lack wisdom; but if any man have this
 " spiritual wisdom already, let him ask more of
 " GOD." You see then what reason there is, why
 this promise of GOD'S HOLY SPIRIT should
 be understood in the latitude wherein it is express'd,
 and not restrained to the regenerate only.

Thirdly, if by having the SPIRIT of GOD, be
 understood the general and common influence of
 GOD'S SPIRIT upon the minds of men, where-
 by they are quickned and excited to their duty;
 I grant that no man that hath not the SPIRIT
 of GOD in this sense, can pray to GOD, or ac-
 ceptably perform any other duty of religion: and
 this assertion is very agreeable to the phrase and
 language of the holy scriptures, which attribute all
 good motions and actions to the SPIRIT of
 GOD working in us, and assisting us; and in this
 sense unregenerate men are under the influence of
 GOD'S SPIRIT, or else they could not be said to
 resist

resist it : but they have not the SPIRIT of GOD SERM.
dwelling in them, which is the most proper sense CCLIII.
of having the SPIRIT of GOD, in which sense
the apostle says, “ if any man have not the SPI-
“ RIT of CHRIST, he is none of his : ” but then
it is specially to be noted, that the common and tran-
sient operation of GOD’S SPIRIT, which is pre-
paratory to conversion and regeneration, and where-
by GOD works in men a sense of sin, and some in-
clination and disposition to goodness, is by our SA-
VIOUR peculiarly attributed to the FATHER, as his
proper work, in which sense our SAVIOUR says,
John vi. 44. “ No man can come to me, except
“ the FATHER, which hath sent me, draw him,”
ver. 45. “ Every man therefore that hath heard,
“ and learned of the FATHER, cometh unto me.”
Now men are said “ to learn of the FATHER,
“ and to be drawn by him,” by those preparatory
dispositions for the receiving of the christian reli-
gion, which were wrought in men by that natural
sense of good and evil, which they have by the
law of nature, which is properly the dispensation of
the FATHER, as being the immediate effect of
GOD’S creation, as a late judicious writer hath very
well observed, and more largely explained.

Fourthly, but if by having the SPIRIT of
GOD, be meant the special effect of regeneration
and sanctification, and the permanent influence and
constant residence of GOD’S HOLY SPIRIT in
good men, then I make no doubt to say, that
those who have not the SPIRIT of GOD in this
sense, may ask his SPIRIT of him ; that is, those
who are not yet regenerate and sanctified, may in
an acceptable manner pray to GOD to give them

SERM. his HOLY SPIRIT, to the purposes of sanctifi-
 CCLIII. cation and perseverance in goodness ; and they may
 ask this of GOD sincerely, earnestly, and in faith,
 which are the qualifications of an acceptable prayer.
 And this I think may be evidently made appear,
 both from scripture, and by good consequence from
 the concessions of all sorts of divines.

1. From scripture. It is plain that wicked and unregenerate men are commanded and required to pray to this purpose. Not to mention the general commands concerning prayer, which do certainly oblige unregenerate men, I will produce one plain and undeniable instance, Acts viii. 22, 23. where St. Peter directs Simon Magus, whom he expressly declares to be in an unregenerate state, to pray to GOD for the pardon of his great sin, which certainly he would not have done, had he thought an unregenerate man could not pray in an acceptable manner ; because his counsel would have been to no purpose : but it is plain that St. Peter was so far from thinking that an unregenerate man could not pray acceptably to GOD, that he gives this as the reason why he should pray ; because he was unregenerate ; “ pray to GOD, if perhaps the thought of thy
 “ heart may be forgiven thee : for I perceive that
 “ thou art in the gall of bitterness, and in the bond
 “ of iniquity.”

2. This will appear farther by clear consequence, from the concessions of all sorts of divines, and principles granted on all hands.

1. 'Tis universally granted, that it is a thing very pleasing and acceptable to GOD, that men should pray to be regenerate and sanctified ; so that the matter of this prayer is unquestionably acceptable.

2. It is likewise granted on all hands, that before SERM. CCLIII.
a man is regenerate and sanctified, he must be made
sensible of his evil and sinful state, and of his great
need of God's grace and SPIRIT, and that God's
SPIRIT is able to work this change in him, and
that it is the will of God that he should be rege-
nerated and sanctified.

3. It is likewise generally granted, that these
preparatory works of regeneration, these begin-
nings of our repentance and turning to God, and
all desires and endeavours to that purpose, are ac-
ceptable to God.

Now from these concessions it plainly follows,
that an unregenerate man may pray to God accep-
tably for his HOLY SPIRIT, to regenerate and sanc-
tify him. For,

1. The matter of his prayer is very acceptable
to God, according to the first concession.

2. The manner of it may be acceptable, because
an unregenerate man may pray for this sincerely,
with earnestness and in faith : sincerely, because he
may put up this prayer to God, out of a true sense
of his miserable and sinful state, and his great need
of God's grace and HOLY SPIRIT ; and he that
is truly sensible of this, cannot dissemble with God,
he cannot but be very real and sincere in this request :
and this sense of his condition, and the need of what
he asks, will make him earnest and importunate : and
he may pray in faith, that is, not doubting but that
God is able and willing to grant him what he asks,
because he may be convinced that the SPIRIT is
able to work this change in him, and that this is
the will of God, that he should be regenerated and
sanctified, according to the second concession.

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3. There's no reason to think that GOD will not accept such a prayer as this; because these preparative works of regeneration, viz. a sense of our sinful state, and of our need of GOD's grace and SPIRIT, and earnest desires and prayers for these, are acceptable to GOD, according to the third concession. So that now I hope this objection, which hath been so troublesome to many, is fully satisfied.

As for those Texts where it is said, that "the prayers and the sacrifices of the wicked are an abomination to the LORD," I shall briefly return this answer; that these texts are not to be understood of a wicked and ungenerate man, simply as such, but as resolved to continue such. And thus Solomon elsewhere in the Proverbs explains what he means by a wicked man, Prov. xxviii. 9. "He that turneth away his ear from hearing the law, even his prayer shall be an abomination." So that the wicked man, whose prayer is an abomination, is such an one as is obstinately and resolvedly disobedient, such an one "turneth away his ear from hearing the law." And David much to the same purpose, Psal. l. 15, 16, 17. "Call upon me in the day of trouble; I will deliver thee, and thou shalt glorify me. But unto the wicked God saith, What hast thou to do to declare my statutes, or that thou shouldst take my covenant in thy mouth? seeing thou hatest instruction, and castest my words behind thee." Such wicked men as will not be reclaimed, what have they to do to pray, or perform any other act of religion? Nothing that they do, whilst such, can be acceptable to GOD. And to the same sense David says elsewhere, "If I regard iniquity in my heart, the LORD will not hear my

“my prayer. God will reject the prayers of the best men, if they retain a secret love to any sin.

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If it be yet farther objected, that unregenerate men are out of CHRIST, in and through whom we are accepted : To this I answer, that those only who are in CHRIST, are in a state of perfect acceptance with God : but the beginning of this state, and all tendency towards it, such as is hearty and earnest prayer to God for his HOLY SPIRIT to regenerate and sanctify us, have their degrees of acceptance from their relation to the perfect state whereof they are the beginnings, and toward which they tend : for by the same reason that a regenerate state is acceptable to God, all the beginnings of it, and preparations to it are proportionably acceptable ; the degrees of acceptance being proportionable to the difference which is between the beginning of a thing, and the perfection of it.

Having thus endeavoured to clear this truth, I come in the

Fourth and last place to make some brief application of it to ourselves.

I. This is matter of great encouragement to us, under the sense of our own weakness and impotency. When we consider the corruption of our nature, the strength of our lusts, and the malice and power of the devil, and compare our weakness with the strength of those mighty enemies of our souls, we are apt to despond in our minds, and our hearts are ready to fail within us ; like the people of Israel, when they heard the report of the spies, concerning the strength of the land which they were to conquer, and the terror of the inhabitants, they wish themselves almost dead, for fear of death ; “ Would

SERM. "to God we had died in the land of Ægypt; or
CCLIII. "would to God we had died in the wilderness.

"Wherefore hath the LORD brought us into this
"land, to fall by the sword? were it not better
"for us to return into Ægypt? Numb. xiv. 2. &c."
Thus we are apt to be dishearten'd when we look
only to ourselves, and consider the power of our
enemies: but when we look beyond ourselves, as
Caleb and Joshua did, to that presence and strength
of God, which was promised to go along with them;
if we would but consider those gracious and powerful
assurances of God's HOLY SPIRIT, which are
offered to us, and are ready to join with us in this
holy warfare of fighting against sin, and subduing
and mortifying our lusts, we should then encourage
ourselves as they did, "Fear ye not the people
"of the land: for they are bread for us, their de-
"fence is departed from them; the LORD is with
"us, fear them not," Numb. xiv. 9. If we would
but apply ourselves to God for the aids of his
grace and HOLY SPIRIT, and make use of
that assistance which he offers, we should (as the
apostle speaks in another case, Heb. xi. 34.) "out
"of weakness be made strong, wax valiant in fight,
"and be able to put to flight the armies of aliens."
If we would but wisely consider our own strength,
"how should one chase a thousand, and two put
"ten thousand to flight?" All our spiritual ene-
mies would quail before us, and as 'tis said of the
Canaanites, Josh. v. 1. "Their hearts would melt,
"and there would be no more spirit left in them."
2 Kings vi. 15. when Elisha's servant saw an host,
compassing the city of Samaria with horses and
chariots, he was in great fear and perplexity, and
said,

said, "master, what shall we do?" but when SERM.
upon Elisha's prayer, "the Lord had opened CCLIII.
"the eyes of the young man, and he saw and be-
"hold the mountains were full of horses and cha-
"riots of fire round about Elisha;" then he took
heart and his fears vanish'd, because "those that
"were with them, were more than they that were
"against them." Thus, if our eyes were opened
by faith, to discern those invisible aids and assist-
ances which stand by us, how should this raise our
courage, and our confidence, and make us to triumph
with the apostle, Rom. viii. 31. "if God be for
"us, who can be against us?" and to rebuke our
fears, and the despondency of our spirits, as David
does, "why art thou cast down, O my soul? and
"why art thou disquieted within me? trust still in
"God;" and to say with him, when "multi-
"tudes of enemies compass us about, in the name
"of the Lord we will destroy them." Eph. vi.
10. when the apostle represents to the christians
what enemies they had to contest withal, "we
"fight not only against flesh and blood;" that is,
not only against men who persecute us; but against
devils, who continually infest and tempt us, against
principalities and powers, &c. he encourageth
them against all these, by the strength of God;
"finally, my brethren, be strong in the LORD,
"and in the power of his might." Thus we
should encourage ourselves in God, and animate
our resolutions from the consideration of God's
HOLY SPIRIT, "that spirit of might and of
"power," which God is ready to give to every
one of us, to assist us to do whatever he requires of
us. And we have no reason to complain of weak-
ness,

SERM. nefs, so long as the strength of GOD stands by
 CCLIII. us, and the powerful aids of GOD'S SPIRIT are
 ready to join themselves to us.

2. Let us earnestly beg of GOD his HOLY SPIRIT, seeing it is so necessary to us, and GOD is so ready to bestow this best of gifts upon us. Bread is not more necessary to the support of our natural life, than the HOLY SPIRIT of GOD is to our spiritual life and strength; and there is no father upon earth more ready to give bread to his children that cry after him, than GOD is to give his HOLY SPIRIT to those who heartily and earnestly beg it of him. Did we but know how great a gift the SPIRIT of GOD is, and how necessary to us, we would not lose such a blessing, for want of asking; but we would be importunate with GOD, and give him no rest, ask, and seek, and knock, and address ourselves to him with all earnestness, and never give over, till our desires were granted.

3. Let us take heed of grieving the SPIRIT of GOD, and provoking him to withdraw himself from us. As GOD is very ready to give his SPIRIT to us, so we should give the best entertainment we can to so great a guest, lest we give him cause to take away his HOLY SPIRIT from us. And there are two things chiefly which provoke GOD hereto.

(1) If we resist and quench the motions of his SPIRIT, and be incompassionate to the dictates and suggestions of it. We affront the SPIRIT of GOD which is given us for our guidance and direction, when we will not be ruled, and governed, and led by it; we thrust the SPIRIT of GOD out of his
 office,

office, and make his presence useleſs and unneceſſary SERM.
to us, and this cauſeth him to go away grieved CCLIII.
from us.

(2) If we harbour and entertain any thing that is of a contrary quality and nature to him, and in-
conſiſtent with him; and of ſuch a nature is every
luſt and corruption that is cheriſh'd in our ſouls.
The SPIRIT of GOD is the beſt friend in the
world: but as friends have the moſt tender reſent-
ments of unkind uſage, ſo the SPIRIT of GOD
is of a moſt tender and delicate ſenſe, and cannot
bear unkindneſs, eſpecially ſuch an unkindneſs, as to
take in to him the greateſt enemy he hath in the
world: for there is no ſuch ſtrong antipathy in na-
ture, as there is between ſin, and the HOLY SPI-
RIT of GOD. The SPIRIT of GOD cannot
endure to dwell in an impure ſoul. If we would
have the SPIRIT of GOD abide with us, we muſt
give no entertainment to any luſt, we muſt baniſh
the love of all ſin for ever out of our hearts: for
if we harbour any luſt in our boſom, it will be to
us as Dalilah was to Sampſon, it will inſenſibly
“ bereave us of our ſtrength; the SPIRIT of
“ GOD will depart from us, and we ſhall be like
“ other men.”

4. And laſtly, GOD's readineſs to afford the
grace and aſſiſtance of his HOLY SPIRIT to us,
to enable us to the performance of our duty, and
the obedience of his laws, makes all wilful ſin and
diſobedience inexcusable. Let us not pretend any
longer the impoſſibility, or inſuperable difficulty of
our duty, when ſo powerful an aſſiſtance is offer'd
to us. If any man come ſhort of happineſs for want
of performing the conditions of the goſpel, it is by
his

SERM. his own wilful fault and negligence; because he
 CCLIII. would not beg God's grace, and because he would
 not make use of it. If any man be wicked, and
 continue in a sinful course, it is not for want of
 power, but of will to do better. God is always
 beforehand with us in the offers of his grace and as-
 sistance and is wanting to no man in that which is
 necessary to make him good and happy. No man
 shall be able to plead at the day of judgment want
 of power to have done his duty: for "God will
 " judge the world in righteousness;" and then I
 am sure he will condemn no man, for not having
 done that which was impossible for him to do.
 God hath done enough for every man to leave
 him without excuse. St. Paul tells us, that the
 blind heathens should have no apology to make for
 themselves. Next to the being of God, and his
 goodness, and justice, I do as verily believe it, as I
 do any thing in the world, that no man shall be
 able to say to God at the great day, LORD I would
 have repented of my sins, and obeyed thy laws;
 but I wanted power to do it; I was left destitute
 of the grace which was necessary to the performance
 and discharge of duty; I did earnestly beg thy
 HOLY SPIRIT, but thou didst deny me. No man
 shall have the face to say this to God at the great day;
 every man's conscience will then acquit God, and lay
 all the fault upon his own folly and neglect: for
 then "every mouth shall be stopped, and God shall
 " be justified in his saying, and overcome when we
 " are judged."

S E R M O N CCLIV.

The bad and the good use of God's
signal judgments upon others.

L U K E xiii. 5.

*I tell you, nay: but except ye repent, ye shall all
likewise perish.*

THE occasion of these words you have at the SERM. CCLIV.
beginning of the chapter; "there were pre-
sent at that season (says the evangelist,) some
" that told our SAVIOUR of the Galileans, whose
" blood Pilate had mingled with their sacrifices."
These in all probability were some of the faction of
Judas Gaulonita, who about that time, as Josephus
tells us, had stirred up the Galileans, to a sedition
against the Roman government, under a pretence of
asserting their liberty, by freeing themselves from
the Roman tribute; and some of these, coming to
Jerusalem to sacrifice (as the custom of the Jews was,
especially at the time of the passover) Pilate caused
them to be slain upon the place, while they were at
this service, shedding their blood with that of the
beasts, which were killed for sacrifice. The report
of this profane cruelty being brought to our SAVI-
OUR, he (as his custom was in all his conversation, to
raise some useful meditation from such occurrences
that happen'd, and to turn them to a spiritual ad-
vantage) takes occasion from the relation of this
sad

SERM. *bad accident, to correct a very vicious humour,*
 CCLIV. *which hath always reigned in the world, of censu-*
ring the faults of others, whilst we overlook our
own.

The principle of self-love, which was planted in innocent nature, is by the fall and corruption of man degenerated into self-flattery; so that it is now almost become natural to men, to supply the want of a good conscience, by a good conceit of themselves. Hence it comes to pass that men are so ready to take all advantages to confirm themselves in that false peace which they have created to themselves in their own imaginations; and so they can but maintain a comfortable opinion of themselves, they matter not how uncharitable they are to others; and knowing no better way to countenance this fond conceit of themselves, than by fancying God to be their friend, hence it comes to pass, that they are so apt to interpret the several providences of God towards others in favour of themselves; and to abuse the judgments of God, which fall upon their neighbours, into an argument of their own comparative innocency.

And therefore our SAVIOUR (who “knew
 “what was in man,” and what kind of conclusions
 men are apt to draw from such occurrences of pro-
 vidence as this which was now presented,) endea-
 vours in the first place to prevent the bad use they
 were likely to make of it; “Suppose ye, (says he)
 “that these Galileans were sinners above all the
 “Galileans because they suffer’d such things? I tell
 “you nay, &c.” To this instance of the Galileans
 he adds another of the same kind, well known to all
 that dwelt in Jerusalem, and that was of the eighteen
 persons,

persons, who were slain by the fall of a tower, which was in the pool of Siloam at the foot of mount Sion, verse the 4th, "or those eighteen upon whom the Tower of Siloam fell, think ye that they were sinners above all that dwelt in Jerusalem? I tell you, nay."

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And having thus anticipated their censuring of others, our SAVIOUR proceeds to awaken them to a consideration and care of themselves, "I tell you, nay: but except ye repent, ye shall all likewise perish."

The general sense of which words is, that impenitency in sin will certainly be the ruin of men sooner or later: it will probably bring great mischiefs and calamities upon men in this world; however, it will infallibly plunge them into misery in the next. But besides the certain denunciation of misery and ruin to all impenitent sinners, which is the largest sense of the words, and agreeable to many other express texts of scripture, it is probable enough that they may more immediately and particularly refer to those temporal calamities which were to befall the Jews, and be spoken by our SAVIOUR by way of prediction, foretelling what would be the fate of the whole Jewish nation, if they continued impenitent πάντες ὁμοίως ἀπολείσθε, "Ye shall all perish in like manner;" that is, if ye do not repent, besides the vengeance of another world, a temporal judgment as sad as these I have instanced in, and not much unlike them, shall come upon this whole nation: and so indeed it came to pass afterwards. For Josephus tells us, that at the time of the passover, when the whole nation of the Jews were met together, as their custom was, at Jerusalem, they

SERM. they were all shut up and besieged by the Romans;
 CCLIV. and he tells us farther, that in the time of that siege,
 upon a sedition among themselves, a great multitude
 of them were slain in the temple, as they were sacrific-
 ing, and their blood poured forth, together with
 that of the beasts which were to be offered, as had
 happened before to the Galileans.

From the words thus explained, I shall observe
 these two things.

First, the wrong use which men are apt to make
 of the extraordinary and signal judgments of God
 upon others. “Suppose ye that these Galileans were
 “sinners above all the Galileans, because they suf-
 “fered such things?” intimating, that men are very
 apt so to conclude, and that the Jews did so.

Secondly, the right use that we should make of
 these things, which is, to reflect upon our own sins
 and repent of them, lest the like or greater judg-
 ments overtake us. “I tell you, nay: but except
 “ye repent, ye shall all likewise perish.”

First, the wrong use which men are apt to make
 of the extraordinary and signal judgments of God
 upon others; and that is, to be uncharitable and
 censorious towards others, which is commonly conse-
 quent upon a gross and stupid neglect of ourselves.
 For men do not usually entertain and cherish this
 censorious humour for its own sake, but in order
 to some farther end; they are not so uncharitable
 merely out of spite and malice to others, but out of
 self-flattery and a fond affection to themselves. This
 makes them forward to represent others to all the
 disadvantage that may be, and to render them as
 bad as they can, that they themselves may appear
 less evil in their own eyes, and may have a colour to
 set

set off themselves by the comparison. It is the nature of guilt to flee from itself, and to use all possible arts to hide and lessen it. For guilt in the soul is like deformity in the body. Persons very deformed seldom arrive to that absurd conceit of themselves, as to think themselves beauties; but because they cannot think so, they do all they can to comfort and commend themselves by comparison. Hence men are apt to censure and aggravate the faults and miscarriages of their neighbours, that their own may appear the less; for a lesser evil in respect of a greater, hath some face and appearance of good; and therefore men are ready to take all advantages to represent others as bad as may be: and because there can be no greater evidence, that a man is a greater sinner, than if he be declared to be so from heaven, hence it is, that men are so forward to interpret the remarkable judgments of God upon any person, as an argument of his being a more notorious offender than others.

For the farther explication and illustration of this point, I shall do these three things:

I. I shall shew that men are very apt to make this bad use of the signal judgments of God upon others.

II. I shall more particularly consider several of the rash conclusions which men are apt to draw from the judgments of God upon others; whether upon public societies and communities of men, or upon particular persons.

III. I shall shew how unreasonable it is to draw from hence any such rash and uncharitable conclusions concerning others, and likewise how foolish it is from hence to draw comfort and encouragement to ourselves.

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I. That men are very apt to make this bad use of the signal judgments of God upon others. This *our SAVIOUR* plainly intimates in the Text, "Suppose ye that these Galileans were sinners above all the Galileans, because they suffered such things? or those eighteen upon whom the tower of Siloam fell, think ye that they were sinners above all that dwelt in Jerusalem?" By which manner of speaking, *our SAVIOUR* signifies, that men are very apt thus to suppose, that those upon whom the extraordinary judgments of God fall, are no ordinary sinners, but are guilty of somewhat above the common rate of men.

Thus we find Job's friends, when they saw him afflicted by the hand of God, in so strange and extraordinary a manner, from hence presently concluded, he must needs be a prodigious sinner; and because they could find no evidence of this in his life and actions, therefore they concluded that his wickedness was secret, and that it lay there where they could not see it, in his heart and thoughts: for this they laid down for a certain conclusion, that being so remarkable a sufferer, he must needs be a great sinner; and because they could discern no such thing in his outward conversation, they charged him with hypocrisy, and concluded all his external profession of piety and religion to be false and counterfeit.

So likewise, when the man that was born blind was brought to *our SAVIOUR*, John ix. 2. the Disciples presently ask'd him, "Master, who did sin, this man or his parents, that he was born blind?" This was that which lay uppermost in their minds, the very first thing that suggested it-
self

self to their thoughts ; surely this judgment was SERM.
 inflicted upon this man, for some particular and ex- CCLIV.
 traordinary sin, which either he, or (because that
 was not so likely) his parents had been guilty of.

And we find in common experience, how prone
 men are to make uncharitable constructions of the
 judgments of God upon others, and grievously to
 censure those whom God hath smitten ; partly be-
 cause it looks like a vindication of themselves from
 the guilt of the like crimes, since they are not in-
 volved in the like sufferings ; partly to gratify their
 pride and curiosity, in seeming to understand the
 reason and end of God's judgments, as if they had
 been of his council, and saw farther into the rea-
 sons of his providence than other men ; like some
 pragmatistical people in civil matters, who tho' they
 think no more than their neighbours, yet will needs
 seem to understand those hidden and secret springs
 which move publick affairs ; and which is yet
 worse, many times to gratify their own passions,
 and foolish conceits, that GOD is angry with those
 things and persons which displease them, and that
 GOD's judgments are expressions of his particu-
 lar dislike of those whom they disaffect, and would
 certainly punish, if the government of the world
 were in their hands. Or lastly, men think it a
 piece of piety, and affectionate zeal for God, and
 a taking of his part, to censure those heavily, whom
 God afflicts severely ; like some foolish parasites,
 who if they see a great man be angry with any one
 and strike him, they think themselves bound to fall
 upon him, and out of an officious flattery will beat
 him too. But from whatever cause it proceeds, it is
 certainly a very bad thing, and our SAVIOUR

SERM. here in the text does with great vehemency deny,
 CCLIV. that any such conclusion can certainly be collect-
 ed from the judgments of God upon others;
 "I tell you, nay." And to express this more ve-
 hemently, he repeats it again, "I tell you, nay."
 Let us therefore,

II. More particularly consider some of the rash
 conclusions, which men are apt to draw from the
 judgments of God upon others, whether upon
 public societies and communities of men, or upon
 particular persons.

I. It is rash, where there is no divine revelation
 in the case, to be peremptory as to the particular
 sin or kind of it, so as to say, that for such a sin
 God sent such a judgment upon a particular per-
 son, or upon a company of men, unless the judg-
 ment be a natural effect and consequent of such a
 sin; as if a drunken man die of a surfeit, or a lewd
 person of a disease that is the proper effect of such a
 vice, or if the punishment ordained by law, for such
 a crime overtake the offender; in these and such like
 cases, it is neither rash nor uncharitable, to say, such
 a mischief befel a man for such a fault; because
 such an evil is evidently the effect of such a sin:
 but in other cases, peremptorily to conclude, is great
 rashness. Thus the heathen of old laid all those
 fearful judgments of God, which fell upon the Ro-
 man empire in the first ages of christianity, upon the
 christians, as if they had been sent by God on
 purpose to testify his displeasure against that new
 sect of religion. And thus every party deals with
 those that are opposite to them, out of a fond per-
 suasion that God is like themselves, and that he
 cannot but hate those whom they hate, and punish
 those

those whom they would punish, if the sway and government of things were permitted to them.

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Thus the papists on the one hand attribute all the judgments of God upon this nation, the confusion and distractions of so many years, and those later judgments wherewith God hath visited us in so dreadful a manner, to our schism and heresy, as the proper cause of them : (for so they call our reformation of ourselves from their errors and corruptions,) but to what cause then will they ascribe the great felicity of queen Elizabeth's long reign, and the peace of king James his reign ? And then on the other hand, some of the dissenters from our church are wont to ascribe these calamities to a quite different cause, that our reformation hath not gone far enough from the church of Rome. It is hard to say which of these conclusions is most rash and unreasonable ; I wish other reasons of these calamities were not too visible and notorious ; the horrible impiety and wickedness which abounds and reigns amongst us.

2. It is rash likewise for any man, without revelation, to conclude peremptorily, that God must needs in his judgments only have respect to some late and fresh sins, which were newly committed, and that all his arrows are only levelled against those impieties of men which are now upon the stage, and in present view. This is rash and groundless ; and men herein take a measure of God by themselves, and because they are mightily affected with the present, and sensible of a fresh provocation, and want to revenge themselves while the heat is upon them ; therefore they think God must do so too. But there is nothing occasions more

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mistakes in the world about God and his providence, than to bring him to our standard, and to measure his thoughts by our thoughts; and the ways and methods of his providence, by our ways. Justice in God is a wise, and calm, and steady principle, which as to the time and circumstances of its exercise, is regulated by his wisdom. Past and present, are very material differences to us; but they signify little to God, whose vast and comprehensive understanding takes in all differences of time, and looks upon them at one view; so that when the judgments of God follow the sins of men at a great distance, "God is not slack, as men count slackness: for a thousand years are in his sight but as one day, and one day as a thousand years;" as the apostle reasons about this very case I am now speaking of, 2 Pet. iii. 8.

And to convince men of their error and mistake in this particular, the scripture hath given us many instances to the contrary, that the justice of God hath many times a great retrospection, and punisheth the sins of men a long time after the commission of them. This he threatens in the second commandment, "to visit the iniquities of the fathers upon the children, unto the third and fourth generation of them that hate him." Thus we find he dealt with Ahab, "he did not bring the evil in his days, but in his son's days he brought it upon his house," the first of Kings xxi. 29. So likewise we find 2 Sam. xxi. God brought three years famine upon Israel in the days of David, for a national sin committed in Saul's reign; namely, for the cruelty exercised upon the Gibeonites, contrary to the publick faith of the nation given to them.

So

So likewise the extirpation of the Amorites, and the other inhabitants of Canaan, was not a judgment inflicted by God upon them, only for the sins of that present age, but for the iniquity which had been many ages in filling up, as may plainly be collected from the expression, Gen. xv. 16. "The iniquity of the Amorites was not yet full," which was spoken four or five generations before they were rooted out. And so also our SAVIOUR tells us, that "the blood of all the prophets and righteous men which had been shed in all ages, should come upon that generation."

Nay, if this were not so, "how should God judge the world?" And if it be consistent with the justice of God, to respite the greatest part of the punishment of sinners to another world; then certainly he may, without any imputation of injustice, defer the punishment of sin in this world.

3. It is rash to conclude from little circumstances of judgments, or some fanciful parallel betwixt the sin and the punishment, what sinners and what persons in particular God designed to punish by such a calamity. There is scarce any thing betrays men more to rash and ungrounded censures and determinations concerning the judgments of God, than a superstitious observation of some little circumstances belonging to them, and a conceit of a seeming parallel between such a sin, and such a judgment.

This was the ground of Shimei's rash determination concerning David, and what particular sin of his it was, for which God permitted his son Absalom to rise up in rebellion against him, 2 Sam. xvi. 8. "The LORD hath returned upon thee (says he) all the blood of the house of Saul, in whose

SERM. "stead thou hast reigned, and the LORD hath
 CCLIV. "delivered the kingdom into the hand of Absa-
 lom thy son, and behold thou art taken in thy
 "own mischief." Here seemed to be as handsome a
 parall elbetwen this misfortune which befel David,
 and his carriage towards the house of Saul, as can
 easily happen in any judgment. David had carried
 away the kingdom from the family of Saul his fa-
 ther-in-law; and now by the providence of God,
 David's own son Absalom seems to be stirred up to
 supplant his father, and to ravish the kingdom out
 of his hands; the suitableness of the judgment to
 the supposed sin of David, would tempt any man
 that had the curiosity to pry into the judgments of
 God, and a fancy apt to be pleased with parallels,
 to have look'd upon this censure of Shimei, as not
 without ground: for though David was in no fault,
 as to Saul's house, though in truth and reality
 he had the best title to the kingdom that could be,
 it being disposed to him by God's appointment;
 yet because Samuel's anointing him to be king was
 a thing privately done, and so might not either be
 publickly known, or not publickly believed, there
 seems to be a very fair colour and pretence for this
 censure of Shimei.

And therefore methinks the consideration of this
 one instance should very much deter wise men from
 peremptory conclusions concerning the judgments of
 God, upon such slight grounds as a supposed pa-
 rallel between the sin and the punishment: and yet we
 find all sorts of men very superstitiously affected this
 way; all parties are very greedy to catch at any
 shadow of a parallel, between the judgments which
 befall their enemies, and the sins which they suppose
 them

them to be guilty of, and are apt to cry up such SERM.
things as evident testimonies from heaven of CCLIV.
God's displeasure against those, whom they have a
mind to make odious.

In the beginning of the reformation, when Zuin-
glius was slain in a battel by the papists, and his
body burnt, his heart was found entire in the ashes
from whence (saith the historian) his enemies con-
cluded the obdurateness of his heart; but his friends,
the firmness and sincerity of it in the true religion.
Both these censures seem to be built upon the same
ground of fancy and imagination: but it is a wise
and well-grounded observation, which Thuanus the
historian, (who was himself of the Roman commu-
nion) makes upon it, *adeo turbatis odio aut amore*
animis, ut fit in religionis dissentionibus, pro se quisque
omnia superstitiosè interpretatur, "thus (says he) mens
" minds being prejudiced beforehand by love or
" hatred (as it commonly falls out in differences of
" religion) each party superstitiously interprets the
" little circumstances of every event in favour of it-
" self." Every thing hath two handles; and a good
wit and a strong imagination may find something in
every judgment, whereby he may with some appear-
ance of reason turn the cause of the judgment upon
his adversary. Fancy is an endless thing, and if we
will go this way to work, then he that hath the best
wit, is like to be the best interpreter of God's
judgments.

I do not deny (as I touch'd before) but where the
sin is evident, and the punishment is the genuine
product and natural effect of the sin, we may with-
out uncharitableness, ascribe the punishment to the
sin, as the particular cause of it; as sickness to in-
temperance,

SERM. temperance, and poverty to sloth and prodigality.
 CCLIV. or if a judgment be remarkably inflicted upon a
 person, in the very act of some notorious sin; or
 if when a person hath been guilty of a sin, which
 is unquestionably so, and out of all controversy, if
 afterwards a judgment befall that person, which carries
 the very signature of the sin upon it; as when the
 dogs lick'd Ahab's blood, in the very same place
 where he had shed the blood of Naboth; in these
 and the like cases, a man may without rashness and
 uncharitableness fix the cause of such a judgment upon
 such a sin: but then, as I said before, the sin
 must be very evident and out of dispute; and the
 punishment must carry so plain a mark and signature
 upon it, as without straining, and the help of
 fancy, is obvious to every one's observation.

And yet, even in these cases, the party himself
 upon whom the judgment falls may better make
 the interpretation, than a by-stander; and therefore
 the scripture, as it is in all other things very instructive,
 so particularly in this matter it observes
 this decorum, not to bring in others making interpretations
 of the judgments of God, but the persons themselves,
 upon whom the judgments fall. Thus Adonibezek, Judges i. 6, 7.
 when the men of Judah had taken him, and cut off his thumbs
 and his great toes, the scripture does not bring in
 others making a censure and interpretation of this
 judgment of God upon him; but brings him in
 making this reflexion upon himself, "threescore
 " and ten kings, having their thumbs, and their
 " great toes cut off, gathered their meat under my
 " table: as I have done, so God hath requited
 " me." So likewise Jacob's sons, when they were
 brought

brought into trouble in Egypt, about their brother Benjamin, they presently reflect upon their sin against their brother Joseph, Gen. xlii. 21, 22. " They said one to another, we are verily guilty concerning our brother; in that we saw the anguish of his soul, when he besought us, and we would not hear: therefore is this distress come upon us. Therefore behold also his blood is required." They took notice of the resemblance betwixt the sin and the punishment; they had sinned concerning their brother, and they were punish'd in a brother.

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4. It is rash likewise to determine any thing concerning the end and consequence of God's judgments. Commonly all parties that are down are apt to soothe and flatter themselves, that God intends by such and such judgments upon their adversaries, to make way for the restoration of their own sect, and the restitution of those things which they desire. Others, who are more melancholy and concerned, are apt to look upon the worst side of things, and to imagine dreadful and dismal consequences. But it is a fond thing for us to pretend to know the secret ends and designs of the divine providence: for sometimes God makes one calamity the forerunner of another; and sometimes again his omnipotent wisdom forceth good out of evil, and makes a great judgment in the issue to turn to a mighty blessing.

Jacob thought the loss of his son Joseph, one of the greatest calamities that could have befallen him, when it was the greatest mercy to his family that could be: for in truth the providence of God sent him

SERM. him as an harbinger into Egypt, to provide for his
 CCLIV. father and his family.

'Tis observed by the wise author of the history of the council of Trent, that when Zuinglius and Oecolampadius, the two chief protestant ministers among the Swisses died, within a few days of one another, the papists interpreted this to signify God's design to restore their former religion to them, in that he had taken away at once the two great pillars and supports of the protestant cause; upon which the author makes this wise observation, "certainly, says he, it is a pious thought to attribute the disposal of all events to the providence of God; but to determine to what end these events are directed by that high wisdom, is not far from presumption. Men are so religiously wedded to their own opinions, that they are persuaded, that God loves and favours them, as much as they themselves do. But, says he, the things which happen'd afterwards, did confute this presumption; for the protestant doctrine made a much speedier progress after their death, than it had done before." We think that a cause must needs sink, when some great supports of it are taken away: but God stands in need of no man; he can raise up new instruments, or carry on his own design by the weakest and most unlikely means.

5. And lastly, it is rashness to determine that those persons, or that part of the community upon which the judgments of God do particularly fall, are greater sinners than the rest, who are untouched by it. And this is the very case our SAVIOUR instanceth in here in the text, "suppose
 " ye

"ye that these Galileans were sinners above all the SERM.

Galileans, because they suffered such things? I CCLIV.

tell you, nay. Or those eighteen upon whom

the tower in Siloam fell, think ye that they were

sinners above all men that dwelt in Jerusalem? I

tell you, nay." And this brings me to the

III. Particular I proposed, which was, to shew how unreasonable it is for men to draw any such uncharitable conclusions from the judgments of God upon others, that they are greater sinners than others; and likewise how foolish it is from hence to take any comfort and encouragement to ourselves, that because we escape those calamities which have befallen others, therefore we are better than they. Our SAVIOUR vehemently denies, that either of these conclusions can justly be made from the remarkable judgments of God, which befall others, and pass by us, "I tell you, nay: but except ye repent, ye shall all likewise perish."

I. It is very unreasonable for men to draw any such uncharitable conclusions concerning others, that because the judgments of God fall upon them, that therefore they are greater sinners than others. For,

1. What do we know, but that God may inflict those evils upon those particular persons for secret ends and reasons, only known to his own infinite wisdom, and fit to be concealed from us? What do we know, but he may afflict such a person in a remarkable manner, purely in the use of his sovereignty, without any special respect to the sins of such a person, as being greater than the sins of other men; but yet for some great end, very worthy of his wisdom and goodness? As for the
trial

SERM. trial of such a man's faith, and of his exemplary
 CCLIV. patience and Submission to the will of GOD, it
 pleaseth GOD to set him up for a mark, and to
 suffer many and sharp arrows to be shot at him,
 to try whether his faith and patience be proof; as
 men set up armour and shoot at it with a double
 charge, not with a design to hurt it, but to prove
 and praise it.

We are assured that the Goodness of God is
 such, that had it not been for sin, we had never
 known affliction, nor been exercised with it; but
 now, that we have all sinned, and upon a common
 account are all liable to the justice of God, he
 may single out from this common herd of sinners
 whom he pleaseth; to smite with his judgments, and
 for what end he pleaseth; and therefore when God
 at any time lets fly an arrow at a particular person,
 this only signifies at the utmost, that he is a sinner
 in general, but no man can from hence with any
 certainty conclude, that this man is a greater sinner
 than other men.

And this is very plain from those instances I have
 had occasion before to mention; the instance of Job
 whom God afflicted in a most terrible manner, for
 the trial of his faith and patience, and to furnish all
 ages with a standing and glorious example of so great
 and necessary a virtue: and from the instance of
 the man in the gospel that was born blind; con-
 cerning whom our SAVIOUR expressly declares,
 that this judgment did not befall this man for any
 particular or remarkable sin, which either this man
 or his parents had been guilty of above others, but
 that the glorious power of God might be manifested
 in his miraculous cure, John ix. 3. "Neither hath
 " this

“ this man sinned, nor his parents: but that the
 “ works of God should be made manifest in
 “ him.”

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2. What do we know but that God may send these calamities upon some particular persons, in mercy to the generality; and upon some particular places in a nation, out of kindness to the whole? When wickedness has overspread a nation, and is grown universal, if out of this herd of sinners, the justice of God please to single out some few persons, and to chase them and hunt them down for terror to the rest, that others “ may hear, and fear “ and take warning;” this doth not signify, that the persons selected for ruin were in a different condition from the rest, or that others had not deserved the like judgments as well as they; it only signifies, that “ God remembers mercy in the midst of judgment,” and that he was not willing to destroy them all; that “ he does not delight in the death “ of sinners, but rather that they should turn from “ their wickedness and live.” He punisheth a few for example, that others taking warning by it, he may have the opportunity and occasion to spare a great many.

Not but that the hand of God doth sometimes as it were by a finger point at the sin, which it designs to punish; as when remarkable punishments follow visibly upon notorious sins; when the sinner is punish'd, *flagrante crimine*, in the very act and heat of his sin; when some great and clamorous impiety calls down some more immediate and sudden judgment from heaven; when a sin is punish'd in its own kind, with a judgment so plainly suited to it, and so pat, that the punishment carries the
 very

SERM. very mark and signature of the sin upon it; as in
 CCLIV. the case of Adonibezek, who was forc'd to acknow-
 ledge, that "as he had done, so God had re-
 quited him;" and as in the known story of Ba-
 jazet, who having been a cruel and barbarous tyrant
 was punish'd in his own kind, by falling into the
 hands of Tamerlane, who used him with the same
 insolence and cruelty, which he had exercised to-
 wards others.

In such cases as these, men may without unchari-
 tableness conclude, that such a judgment of God
 was sent upon a particular errand to chastise and
 punish such a sin: but then in such cases as these,
 we do not from the judgments inflicted conclude a
 person guilty of some great sin which we do not
 know before; but by comparing the sin, which we
 knew him to be guilty of, with the judgment which
 was inflicted, we do reasonably collect, that such a
 judgment was probably sent for such a sin: but ge-
 nerally speaking, no man can with certainty con-
 clude, from the greatness of the judgment that falls
 upon any one, that such a man was a more grievous
 sinner than others, who have escaped the same or
 the like judgments.

II. It is foolish likewise to take any comfort and
 encouragement to ourselves, that because we have
 escaped those fore judgments which have befallen
 others, therefore we are better than they are; for
 (as I have shewn) these judgments do not necessa-
 rily import, that those upon whom they fall, are
 greater sinners, and that those who escape them, are
 not so: but suppose it true, that they were greater
 sinners than we are, for any man from hence to
 take encouragement to himself to continue in sin,
 is

is as if from the severe punishment which is inflicted upon a traitor, a man should encourage himself in felony; both these sorts of criminals are by the law in danger of death, only the circumstances of death are in one case more severe and terrible, than in the other; but he that from hence encourageth himself in felony, reasons very ill, because he argues against his own life. The only prudent inference that can be made, is not to come within the danger of the law, which punisheth all crimes, though not with equal severity.

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Thus I have done with the first thing I propounded to speak to from these words, viz. the wrong use which too many are apt to make of the signal and extraordinary judgments of God upon others. I proceed to the

Second thing I observed in the text, viz. the right use we should make of the judgments of God upon others; and that is, to reflect upon our own sins, and to repent of them, lest a like or greater judgment overtake us. This our SAVIOUR tells us in the next words, "But except ye repent, ye shall all likewise perish." As if he had said, there is no reason at all, why ye should conclude from those terrible judgments of God, which have befallen those miserable persons, that they were greater sinners than yourselves, who have for the present escaped those judgments: but instead of censuring others, you should look into yourselves; the most proper reflection to be made upon such occasions is, that you are liable to the like judgments, your sins have deserved that God's providence should have dealt so with you, as it hath done with "those Galileans, whose blood Pilate min-

SERM. “gled with their sacrifices; or with those eighteen
 CCLIV. “persons upon whom the tower in Siloam fell;”
 and for what reasons soever these judgments of God
 fell upon them, and pass’d by you, (which you are
 not at all concerned to inquire into) to be sure if
 you continue impenitent, you have reason to expect
 the like, or greater ruin.

When we see the judgments of God abroad in
 the world, and to fall heavily upon particular places
 and persons, we should argue thus with ourselves;
 for what reason the holy and wise providence of
 God hath dealt so severely with others, I know
 not; whether out of a particular displeasure against
 them, for some notorious sin committed by them;
 or whether for a merciful warning to me and others;
 or for both; it is not for me to pry curiously into
 the counsels of God, and to wade into the depth
 of his judgments: but there is one use which I am
 sure it concerns me nearly to make of it, to look
 into myself, “to search and try my ways, to re-
 pent of my sins and to forsake them,” lest whilst
 I am gazing upon others, I fall into the like or
 greater calamities. It may be those persons and
 places, which have been so severely visited with the
 judgments of God, were no more obnoxious to
 him, than I am; and when this hath been done to
 others, in all appearance not guilty of greater sins
 than I am, what may not I fear who am in the
 same condemnation? It may be they were not so
 great sinners as I am, this should awaken me so
 much the more to a consideration of my own
 danger: nay, possibly many of those whom the rod
 of God hath smitten, were his own dear children.
 This should startle men most of all: for “if this
 “have

“ have been done to the green tree ; what shall be SERM.
 “ done to the dry ?” If this hath been the lot of CCLIV.
 those whom God loves ; what shall be the portion
 of those whom he hates ? “ If judgment begin at
 “ the house of God ; where shall the ungodly and
 “ the sinner appear ?”

The judgments of God, which are executed upon particular places and persons, are designed by him to be so many admonitions to “ the inhabitants of “ the world to learn righteousness.” That fearful ruin which befel Sodom and Gomorrah, and the cities about them, was not only intended for the punishment of the inhabitants of those wicked cities ; but for a standing example, and a lasting terror to all ages of the world. So St. Jude tells us, ver. 7. that “ Sodom and Gomorrah, and the cities about “ them, are set forth for an example, suffering the “ vengeance of eternal fire.”

’Tis the advice of the prophet Micah, vi. 9.
 “ Hear ye the rod, and him that hath appointed
 “ it.” Every rod of God, every affliction hath a voice, which doth not only speak to the sufferers, but to the spectators also ; not only to those who are smitten, but to those who stand by and look on : and if, when God sends judgments upon others, we do not take warning and example by them ; if instead of reflecting upon ourselves, and trying our own ways, we fall a censuring of others ; if we will pervert the meaning of God’s providences, and will not understand the design and intention of them ; then we leave God no other way to awaken us, and to bring us to a consideration of our evil ways, but by pouring down his wrath upon our heads, that so he may convince us to be sinners by

SERM. the same argument, from whence we have concluded
 CCLIV. others to be so? or if we continue impenitent, he
 may ruin us as incorrigible.

And thus I have done with the second observation I propounded, viz. The right use we ought to make of the judgments of God upon others, which is, to reflect upon ourselves, and to repent of our evil ways, lest the like or greater judgments overtake us. I shall only draw an inference or two, from what I have already discoursed upon these two heads.

1. Let us adore the judgments of God, and instead of searching into the particular reasons and ends of them, let us say with St. Paul, Rom. xi. 33. "How unsearchable are his judgments, and his ways past finding out!" If he who was taken up into the third heaven, and had such multitudes of revelations, and was admitted so much nearer to the secrets of God than we are, durst not search into them, how much less should we, who only converse here below?

Let us not then trouble ourselves with nice enquiries into these things; nor one another with mutual censures and uncharitable reflections upon one another: but let us all agree in this, to acknowledge the righteousness of God in all his providences to us and others, "to humble ourselves under his mighty hand, ἀσπάζεσθαι τὰ συμβαίνοντα, to kiss all events of the divine providence," and to believe, that if we be good, they shall turn to our good. Let us, every one of us, comply with the open and visible ends of God's judgments upon ourselves and others, which is, "to search and try our ways, and to return unto the LORD;" and
 for

for the rest, let us believe that it is best for us, that SERM. CCLIV.
things are as they are; that "his judgments are
"unsearchable, and his ways past finding out."

2. Let us not be rash in our censures and determinations concerning the judgments of God upon others; let us not wade beyond our depth into the secrets of God: for "who hath known the mind
"of the LORD, or who hath been his counsel-
"lor?" Let us not be hasty and peremptory to pass sentence upon others, because of any evil or calamity that befalls them. We may be as severe to ourselves, as we please; this is safe and prudent: but "who art thou that judgest another man's servant?" What our SAVIOUR said in the case of the woman accused of adultery, is very applicable to those who are so forward to censure others, as the causes of God's judgments; "he that is without
"sin, let him throw the first stone." If there be any man that is not conscious to himself that ever he offended and provoked God, that man may have leave to lay all the fault of God's judgments upon others.

God hath of late years in his providence towards this nation so ordered his judgments, and they have fallen with so great an equality upon all sorts of men, that we cannot without great rashness fix the cause of them upon any particulars: but however, this does not appertain to us, to pry into the secret reasons of God's dispensations; that which properly belongs to us, is to take off our eyes from others, and to look into ourselves; and if we would do this, we should see reason enough for God's judgments, and great cause to admire his mercy and

SERM. goodness to us, that he hath been pleased to spare
CCLIV. us, when he hath ruined so many others.

So that the proper use of all the judgments of God upon others, is to bring us to a consideration of ourselves and our own ways, and to argue ourselves into repentance. We should reason thus, The judgments of God, which have fallen here and there upon others, were intended for terror to us; and if we still continue impenitent, if we be unreformed by these providences of God, which were purposely designed and intended for our amendment, what can we expect but that God should also send upon us the like or greater calamities, and that "except we repent, we should all likewise perish."

I cannot apply these words, as our SAVIOUR does, because as I told you, they are probably a prediction of a particular event to the nation of the Jews, in case they continued impenitent; which they did, and this prophecy was afterwards sadly fulfilled upon them in the utter ruin and destruction of that nation: but this we may assuredly say, from the warrant of the general tenour of scripture, that if notwithstanding these great judgments of God which have been upon us, and have made such fearful desolations among us, we do not "search and try our ways, and turn to him who hath smitten" others for a warning to us, we have reason to fear, that we shall suffer in the same manner, or that God will bring some greater temporal judgments upon us, and "be angry with us, until he hath consum'd us."

But whatever God may do, as to temporal judgments, this we are as sure of, as the word of
God

GOD can make us, that there is a sad fate hangs SERM.
over all impenitent sinners, which, however they CCLIV.
may escape in this world, will certainly fall upon
them in the next. "God hath sworn in his wrath,
"that such shall not enter into his rest." He
is immutably determined to make such for ever
miserable, as by their final obstinacy and impeni-
tency refuse to be happy. And of this terrible
doom, the judgments here in the text are but an
imperfect type and representation. How glad would
sinners then be, to suffer only such things as the
Galileans did! what a favour would they esteem
it, to have no worse fate than "those eighteen
"men, upon whom the tower in Siloam fell!" and
to be crush'd under the weight of the heaviest
rocks and mountains, and there to lie hid for ever,
"from the face of him that sits upon the throne,
"and from the wrath of the lamb!" No, it is a more
fearful ruin, a destruction infinitely more terrible,
that attends those in another world, who will not
repent in this life, even "everlasting destruction
"from the presence of the LORD, and from the
"glory of his power." And how great and fearful
that is, is not to be express'd in words, nor can
we frame any perfect Idea of it from any of those
pains and sufferings which we are acquainted with
in this world: for "who knows the power of
"God's anger?" who can conceive the utmost
of what omnipotent justice is able to do to
sinners?

Nor have we any reason in the mean time
to think that God will put a stop to temporal
judgments; but that if we be not reformed by

SERM. all those terrible things which our eyes have
CCLIV. seen, God will “punish us yet seven times
“more for our sins.” If we still persist in our
Atheism and Prophaneness, in our contempt of God
and his worship, in our abominable lusts and impie-
ties; what can we look for, but greater judgments,
and a more “fiery indignation” to consume us
and our habitations?

Methinks nothing is a sadder presage of greater
calamities, and a more fearful ruin yet to befall us,
than that we have hitherto been so little reformed by
those loud and thick vollies of judgments which
have already been thunder’d out upon us. This was
that which at last brought so terrible a destruction
upon the Egyptians, that they were harden’d under
ten plagues. To be impenitent under the judgments
of God, which are so mercifully designed to re-
claim and reform us, is to poison ourselves with that
which was intended for our physic, and by a mi-
raculous kind of obstinacy, “to turn the rods of
“God into serpents. O that we were wise, that
“we understood this, and that we would consider
“our latter end!”

A
T A B L E

O F T H E

T E X T S of each S E R M O N.

S E R M O N CCXXXVIII, CCXXXIX,
CCXL, CCXLI, CCXLII.

² C O R. iv. 3, 4. *But if our gospel be hid, it is hid to them that are lost: in whom the God of this world hath blinded the minds of them which believe not, lest the light of the glorious gospel of CHRIST, who is the image of GOD, should shine unto them.*

P. 3, 18, 34, 48, 64

S E R M O N CCXLIII, CCXLIV, CCXLV.

J O H N iii. 19. *And this is the condemnation, that light is come into the world, and men loved darkness rather than light, because their deeds were evil.*

p. 88, 107, 123

S E R M O N CCXLVI.

J O H N iii. 20. *For every one that doth evil, hateth the light, neither cometh to the light, lest his deeds should be reprov'd.*

P. 147

S E R M O N CCXLVII.

J O H N viii, 36. *If the son therefore shall make you free, ye shall be free indeed*

p. 164

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S E R M O N CCXLIX.

MATTH. xvi. 26. *For what is a man profited, if he shall gain the whole world, and lose his own soul? or what shall a man give in exchange for his soul?* p. 202

S E R M O N CCL, CCLI.

LUKE xii. 4, 5. *And I say unto you, my friends, be not afraid of them that kill the body, and after that have no more that they can do. But I will forewarn you whom ye shall fear: fear him, which after he hath killed, hath power to cast into hell, yea, I say unto you, fear him.* p. 221, 237

S E R M O N CCLII, CCLIII.

LUKE xi. 13. *How much more shall your heavenly Father give the HOLY SPIRIT to them that ask him?* p. 249, 268

S E R M O N CCLIV.

LUKE xiii. 5. *I tell you, nay: but except ye repent, ye shall all likewise perish.* p.

Prayers, &c.

p. 317

TO THE

R E A D E R.

YOU have here an end of this great work, and I can now assure you, that I have faithfully discharged what at first I promis'd, which was, to give you these sermons truly transcribed from the originals. I have sometimes put two sermons into one, or three into two, (as the author used to do in those he printed) and if on that account I have left out repetitions, or shorten'd some things which had been before printed, yet I never alter'd either the words or sense otherwise than was necessary for the connexion; and as I did this purely to make the work more perfect, I hope I have rather obliged the public, than deserv'd the censure of any.

By

To the READER.

By these sermons you have seen how good and useful a preacher the author was; and tho' the publishing of them was all I had to do, yet that the world may see, that he was devout as well as eloquent, I have ventured to annex some of his prayers, with a short discourse to his servants before the receiving of the sacrament, all written by his own hand. These are no great addition to the work, and will, I hope, be valued by some, or at the worst can only be blamed as the indiscreet zeal, rather than any interest or design of the publisher.

Brafted in Kent,
Dec. 3, 1703.

Ra. Barker.

P R A Y E R S

Compos'd by

Arch-Bishop *TILLOTSON*.

To which is added,

A short DISCOURSE to his Servants

Before the

S A C R A M E N T.

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A PRAYER before Sermon.

GREAT and glorious LORD GOD! the high and holy one, who inhabitest eternity, and dwellest in that light which is not to be approach'd: we pray thee to look down from heaven, the habitation of thy holiness and thy glory, upon us vile and sinful creatures. Have mercy upon us, O LORD! and according to the multitude of thy tender mercies, blot out all our transgressions: and do thou keep it for ever in the purpose and resolution of our hearts, to serve and fear thee for the future, and to keep all thy commandments always, that it may be well with us, and with our children after us. We pray thee to this end, to write thy law in our hearts, and to put thy fear into our inward parts, that we may never depart from thee.

Grant us the grace of thy HOLY SPIRIT, to become every day better; to reform and amend whatever is amiss in the frame and temper of our minds, or in the course and actions of our lives; to enable us to mortify our lusts, to govern our passions, and to order our whole conversation aright; to assist us to all that is good, and to keep us from all evil, and to preserve us to thy heavenly kingdom.

We pray thee to instruct us in all the particulars of our duty, which we owe to thee and men; that we may herein exercise ourselves always to have consciences void of offence both towards God and towards men; that we may love thee the LORD
OUR

our GOD with all our hearts, and with all our souls, and with all our strength; and may love our neighbour as ourselves, and whatever we would that men should do unto us, that we may do likewise unto them. And let the grace of GOD, which hath appeared to all men, and brings salvation, teach us that denying ungodliness and worldly lusts we may live soberly and righteously and godly in this present world; waiting for the blessed hope and glorious appearing of the great GOD and our SAVIOUR JESUS CHRIST, who gave himself for us, that he might redeem us from all iniquity, and purify to himself a peculiar people, zealous of good works.

And we pray thee to make us sensible of our own frailty, of the shortness and uncertainty of this life, and of the eternity of the next; to make us careful so to live, as we shall wish we had done when we come to die: let our loins always be girded about, and our lamps burning, and we ourselves like unto men that wait for their lord.

We pray thee with us to extend thy goodness to the whole world. Let thy way be known upon earth, and thy saving health among all nations. Pity and relieve the miseries and afflictions of men; especially of those in our neighbour nations, who suffer for thy truth and righteousness sake. Support them, O LORD! under their sufferings, and in thy due time deliver them out of them. Bless thy church: reform whatsoever thou seest to be amiss in the belief and lives of Christians; and grant that all those who profess thy name and the holy religion of our blessed SAVIOUR, may live as it becomes the gospel, and may depart from all iniquity.

In

In a particular manner we pray thee to be gracious to these sinful nations to which we are related; to pardon our great and crying sins, to prevent those judgments which our sins have justly deserv'd, and to spare us according to thy great mercy. In a more especial manner, we pray thee to pour down thy blessings upon thy servant and our sovereign, ——, by thy grace king of *England, Scotland, France, and Ireland*, defender of the faith, and in all causes and over all persons in these his dominions supreme governor. Preserve him in his person: make his government a public blessing to these nations; let religion and righteousness flourish under the influences of it, and let there be abundance of peace in his days. Bless him in his royal relations, —— and all the royal family. And thou, who art the wise God and governeſt all the affairs of the world, be pleas'd so to bless and direct all public counsels and affairs amongst us, as that they may tend to the advancement of thy glory, the preservation of religion, and the peace and happiness of these kingdoms. Bless, we pray thee, all ranks and orders of men amongst us, and make them all, in their several places and stations, useful and serviceable to thy glory and to the public good. Bless those to whom thou hast committed the care of instructing and governing thy church, by what titles soever they are distinguish'd, archbishops, bishops, and all others that minister in holy things. We pray thee to make them faithful to that trust which thou hast committed unto them, and to grant that by their diligent labours, and prudent carriage, and holy and exemplary lives, they may gain many unto righteousness. Bless the

two universities of this land; grant that they may answer the ends of their institution, that religion and learning and virtue may be the glory of those places.

We pray thee to bless us thine unworthy servants, who at this time are assembled and met together in thy name; to be present in the midst of us, and to assist us in the work and service which we are about; and to grant that those truths which shall be delivered to us out of thy word, may have a due effect and influence upon our hearts and lives: All which we humbly beg of thee for the sake of our LORD JESUS CHRIST; in whose holy name and words, &c.

A prayer, which (as the publisher conjectures) he used before his composing his sermons.

O LORD GOD of truth, I humbly beseech thee to enlighten my mind by thy HOLY SPIRIT, that I may discern the true way to eternal salvation: and to free me from all prejudice and passion, from every corrupt affection and interest that may either blind or seduce me in my search after it.

Make me impartial in my enquiry after truth, and ready whenever it is discovered to me to receive it in the love of it, to obey it from the heart, and to practise it in my life, and to continue stedfast in the profession of it to the end of my days.

I perfectly resign myself, O LORD, to thy conduct and direction, in confidence that thy mercy and goodness is such, that thou wilt not suffer those who sincerely desire to know the truth, and rely upon thy guidance, finally to miscarry.

And

And if in any thing which concerns the true worship and service of thee my GOD, and the everlasting happiness of my soul, I am in any error and mistake, I earnestly beg of thee to convince me of it, and to lead me into the way of truth; and to confirm and establish me in it daily more and more.

And I beseech thee, O LORD, always to preserve in me a great compassion and sincere charity towards those that are in error, and ignorance of thy truth; beseeching thee to take pity on them, and to bring them to the knowledge of it, that they may be saved.

And because our blessed SAVIOUR hath promised that all that do his will shall know his doctrine: Grant, O LORD, that I may never knowingly offend thee in any thing, or neglect to do what I know to be thy will and my duty.

Grant, O heavenly FATHER, these my humble and hearty requests, for his sake who is the way, the truth, and the life, my blessed SAVIOUR and REDEEMER JESUS CHRIST. *Amen.*

Prayers used by him the day before his consecration.

MAY 30. 1691. *the day before my consecration to the Arch-bishoprick, which was on Whitsunday, at St. Mary-le-Bow, when, on Whitsunday Eve, I retired to Edmonton, to spend that day in fasting and prayer, to implore the blessing of almighty GOD upon that action, and the assistance of his grace and HOLY SPIRIT to be vouchsafed to his sinful and unworthy servant, whom his wise providence, and the importunate desire of their majesties king William and queen Mary, the best of princes, (whom GOD in*

great mercy to a most sinful and perverse people bath by a most signal providence set upon the throne of these kingdoms, and sent, (I trust to be our deliverers and benefactors for many generations yet to come) have called to the government and conduct of this miserably distracted church in a very difficult and dangerous time.

I began with a short prayer to almighty GOD to prepare my heart for the duty of this day, and to assist me in the discharge of it, in such a manner as might be acceptable in his sight, through JESUS CHRIST my blessed SAVIOUR and REDEEMER.

I proceeded next to a thanksgiving to almighty GOD for his mercy and goodness to me in the conduct of my whole life, from my first entrance into the world to this day, which was to this effect.

Almighty and eternal LORD GOD, and most merciful father, I prostrate myself before thee, this day, in a most humble and thankful acknowledgment of thy great mercy and goodness vouchsafed to me a sinful creature, and thy most unprofitable servant (not worthy to be called thy son) in the conduct of my whole life, from my first coming into the world to this present day.

And in the first place I desire to bless thy great and glorious name, that I was born of honest and religious parents, tho' of a low and obscure condition. * *Who am I, O LORD GOD, or what is my house, that thou hast brought me hitherto? and hast regarded me according to the estate of a man of high degree, O LORD GOD!*

I bless thee likewise for all the happy circumstances of my birth and education; that I was born in a time and place wherein thy true religion was
preached

* 1 Chron. xvii. 16, 17.

preached and professed. I bless thee for the great care of my good parents to bring me up in the knowledge and fear of *thee, the only true God*, and of *him whom thou hast sent, JESUS CHRIST, whom to know is eternal life* ; and I bless thee, my LORD, for him, *in whom all the nations of the earth are blessed*, whom *in the fulness of time*, thou wast pleased to send into the world to be the SAVIOUR and REDEEMER of Mankind.

I bless thee that thou wast pleased to give my ever honoured and good father the heart to give me, out of the small estate thou gavest him, so liberal an education, whereby I was put into a capacity to serve thee. Forgive I beseech thee, O LORD, that I have made no better use of the talents and opportunities wherewith thou hast entrusted me, and accept of that little which by thy grace I have been enabled sincerely to do for thee. I bless thee, O LORD, for the continual and bountiful support of thy providence, whereby thou hast also enabled me to return to my parents and their children the kindness I received from them, and to be still as a father to them. I bless thee that thou hast so mercifully, and so many times preserved me from the great dangers to which my life was exposed ; and from temptations which would have been too hard for me, if thy grace had not prevented them, and kept me from falling into them : this, O LORD, I acknowledge as one of the great blessings of my life, for which I desire continually to magnify thy great and glorious name.

I bless thee likewise, O LORD ! for that measure of health which I have enjoyed, and for my recovery from a great and dangerous sickness ; for any

happy endowments of mind ; for that degree of understanding which thou hast given me ; and for preserving it to me, when my dear mother, for so many years of her life, lost the use and enjoyment of it, and might have derived that unhappiness to me her child, if thy merciful goodness had not prevented it. Forgive me, O LORD ! that I have made no better use of the faculties, which thou hast endowed me withal, for thy glory, and the benefit and advantage of others.

Blessed be thy name likewise, that thou hast at any time of life, and in any measure render'd me useful to any good purpose. I acknowledge it to be all from thee ; and I desire to return the praise of all to thee my great and constant Benefactor.

Blessed be God for the favour thou hast given me with men both of low and high condition ; and the friends which thou hast raised up for me, to preserve me from the malice of mine enemies, and those who *hate me without a cause, and not for any fault of mine* toward them, O LORD, *thou knowest*.

More especially I bless thee for that great and undeserved favour which I have found in the eyes of our excellent king and queen. Give me, O LORD, the heart, and, if it be thy will, the opportunity to serve them in some measure to answer their favours to me, and the good opinion they have conceived of me, by rendering me useful and instrumental for the public good of this distracted kingdom and church, in endeavouring to heal and reconcile our unhappy differences, and to reform the disorders that are in thy church, and the lives and manners both of the ministers and people.

Finally

Finally I bless thee for all the favours and blessings of my life both spiritual and temporal, so plentifully bestowed upon me; and above all for a sincere desire to serve and please thee, my most gracious and merciful God, and to do good to men made after thine image.

Accept, O LORD! this my hearty sacrifice of praise and thanksgiving which I offer up to thy divine majesty, through the merits and mediation of JESUS CHRIST my blessed SAVIOUR and REDEEMER. *Amen, Amen.*

Next I made this humble and penitent confession of my sins, and earnest supplication for the pardon and forgiveness of them.

I bow myself before thee, most holy and gracious LORD GOD, in a deep sense of mine own vileness and sinfulness, which render me altogether unworthy of the least of those many favours and blessings wherewith thou hast been pleas'd to follow me all the days of my life. I am a sinful man, O LORD, and not worthy to lift up mine eyes to thee my God. My whole life hath been little else but a continued course of disobedience, of unthankfulness, and unworthy returns to thee for all thy benefits. I have *gone astray from the womb*, and have grievously transgressed thy holy laws and commandments, in thought, word, and deed.

I desire now to confess my sins to thee, and with great shame and contrition to bewail and lament them in thy presence. FATHER, *I have sinned against heaven, and before thee, and am no more worthy to be called thy son*, so that if thou be strict to mark iniquity, O LORD! *who can stand?* LORD, *I am*
X 4 *vile,*

vile, what shall I answer thee? I abhor myself, and repent in dust and ashes.

I confess the folly of my childhood, and the great sins and vanities of my youth, and the many great provocations, which in the course of my life I have been often, too often guilty of; the impurities of my heart, and the many evil actions of my life, which thou, O LORD! *knowest altogether*; and for which I desire to take shame to myself, and to be confounded before thee at the remembrance of them. LORD, *they are all in thy sight, and the most secret sins of my life in the light of thy countenance. I am ashamed, O my God, and blush to lift up mine eyes to thee my God.*

I confess likewise before thee, that I have most grievously omitted and neglected my duty to thee, in not making better use of the talents and opportunities of doing good, which thou hast entrusted me withal. I have offended grievously, and been wanting to my duty, in a great part of my life; toward those whom thou hast committed to my charge, in not instructing them, and watching over them as I ought, to inform them in the good knowledge of GOD; and to improve them in other knowledge as was my duty to have done. LORD, forgive this great and heinous sin.

I have offended against thee by anger and impatience upon many occasions; by neglecting to cultivate my mind, and to govern my passions; by uncharitableness and evil speaking; and especially by mispending my precious time, which might have been employed to excellent purposes. LORD, what can I say unto thee for these and innumerable other

provo-

provocations of my life ? But *there is forgiveness with thee, that thou may'st be feared.* LORD let *thy goodness*, which I have had such plentiful experience of, *lead me to repentance, not to be repented of.*

Have mercy upon me, O LORD, and according to the multitude of thy tender mercies, blot out all my transgressions, for thy mercy in JESUS CHRIST, whom thou hast set forth to be propitious by his blood for the sins of the whole world.

I do now, O LORD, in a deep sense of my sinfulness, and a hearty contrition for all my faults of omission and commission which I have been guilty of, humble myself before thee, and earnestly implore thy mercy and forgiveness. I do not only repent of all the evils of my past life ; but am now fully resolved by thy grace utterly to forsake them, and break off the practice of them ; and do most heartily beg the assistance of thy grace to make good this holy resolution for the remaining part of my life. *Create in me a clean heart, O GOD ! and renew a right spirit within me ;* and do thou keep it for ever in the purpose and resolution of my heart, to make good what I have now so solemnly promised to thee ; suffer me not to turn again to sin and folly : but let thy grace continually preserve me, and enable me to do better ; and *let not sin have any more dominion over me, that I should serve it in the lusts of it.*

Grant this, O merciful FATHER, for the sake of my blessed SAVIOUR and REDEEMER, who *died for our sins, and rose again for our justification,* and now *sitteth at thy right hand to make intercession for sinners :* in his name and mediation I offer up this act of repentance, and these my humble supplications

Prayers before his consecration.

cations for pardon and forgiveness, for thy grace and assistance, concluding all in his comprehensive prayer. *Our FATHER, &c.*

Next a prayer for GOD's blessing upon me, and his; and his HOLY SPIRIT to be conferred upon me in the solemn dedication of me the day following to this high and holy office.

Almighty and most merciful LORD GOD, the giver of every good and perfect gift, and the father of lights, who hast promised, that if any man lack wisdom, he shall ask it of thee, who givest to all liberally and upbraidest not, and it shall be given him; I most humbly beseech thee in the solemn action of the day following, wherein I thy servant am to be dedicated, and set apart to the service of thee, and thy church, in so high and holy an office, to shed forth upon me, thy most unworthy servant, the gifts and graces of thy HOLY SPIRIT in a plentiful measure.

And since by thine own wise and good providence, and the importunate desire of those whom thou hast set in authority over us, I am called to the government and conduct of this miserably distracted and divided church, in so very difficult and dangerous a time, be pleased of thine infinite mercy and goodness to thy sinful and most unworthy servant, to afford him the grace and assistance of thy HOLY SPIRIT, to enable him so to discharge the office which thou hast called him to, that thy name may be glorified, and this church, which thou hast committed to his charge, may be edified in faith and holiness, in love, peace, and union, by his diligent and faithful care and endeavours; grant to him such a degree of health, such a vigour of mind, and such a
measure

measure of thy heavenly grace and wisdom, as may fit him to be an useful pastor of thy church. Give me, O LORD, a mind *after thine own heart*, that I may *delight to do thy will*, O my GOD, and let *thy law be written in my Heart*. Give me courage and resolution to do my duty, and a heart *to spend myself*, and *to be spent* in thy service, and in doing all the good that possibly I can the few remaining days of my pilgrimage here on earth.

I have had great experience of thy great mercy and goodness to me all my days: *Hide not thy face from me in this needful time*. * *Thou hast been my help: leave me not, nor forsake me*, O GOD of my salvation; *teach me thy way*, O LORD, and *lead me in a plain path because of mine enemies*. † *In thee, O LORD, do I hope; thou wilt hear, O LORD my GOD; hear me lest otherwise mine enemies should rejoice over me, and when my foot slippeth they should magnify themselves against me*. Deliver me, O my GOD, out of the hand of the wicked, out of the hands of the unrighteous and cruel men: for thou art my hope, O LORD GOD, thou hast been my trust from my youth, by thee have I been holden up from the womb; my praise shall be continually of thee. I am as a wonder unto many; but thou art my strong refuge. Cast me not off in the time of old age, forsake me not when my strength faileth. O GOD, thou hast taught me from my youth, and hitherto have I declared thy wondrous works: now also when I am old and grey-headed, forsake me not, until I have shewed thy strength unto this generation, and thy power to them that are to come. Hear me,

* Psal. xxvii. 9. 11.

† Psal. xxxviii. 15. 16.

Prayers before his consecration.

me, O LORD, for thy mercy's sake in JESUS CHRIST my blessed SAVIOUR and REDEEMER.
Amen.

Then I read the prayers in the consecration office. I concluded with a prayer for the king and queen, and a short ejaculation.

O LORD and heavenly FATHER, high and mighty, king of kings, and lord of lords, the only ruler of princes, who dost from thy throne behold all the dwellers upon earth, most heartily I beseech thee with thy favour to behold our most gracious sovereign lord and lady, king *William* and queen *Mary*; endue them with all those graces and virtues which may fit them for that high station wherein thou hast placed them: give them *wisdom and understanding to go in and out before this great people*, and a heart *to seek their good all the days of their lives*; and make them great examples, of piety and virtue to an evil and degenerate age. Preserve them in their persons, govern their counsels, and prosper their forces by sea and land, and make them victorious over their enemies. Be pleased to take the person of the king into the particular care of thy providence. *Give thy angels charge over him to keep him in all his ways; cover his head in the day of battel*; and crown him with victory and good success. Give courage and resolution to him, and to his armies and fleets, and take away the hearts of his enemies. *Scatter the people that delight in war; shew thyself, thou judge of the earth, and render a reward to the proud.* Let not iniquity always triumph in the oppression of thy people. *Let the wickedness*

Prayers before his consecration.

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wickedness of the wicked come to an end; but do thou establish the just.

I beseech thee to bless and strengthen the queen, to whom thou hast now committed the care and government of these nations. Give her wisdom and resolution for such a time as this. Discover and defeat all the designs of wicked and unreasonable men against the persons of their majesties, and against our peace and religion, and *turn their counsels into foolishness*. Strike through the loins of those that rise up against that happy government, which thy signal providence hath establish'd among us. O LORD, bless them both (if it be thy blessed will) with a hopeful issue to sit upon the throne after them, and to be a blessing to these nations for many generations. This, O LORD, is not impossible with thee. Have a gracious regard, I beseech thee, to the humble condition of the queen thy servant, and make *her that was barren to sing and to become a joyful mother of children*. Hear my prayer, O LORD, in this behalf, for thy mercy's sake in JESUS CHRIST. *Amen.*

And now, O LORD, I humbly beseech thee to accept of these my praises and thanksgivings, which I have humbly offered to thy divine majesty; of my humiliation and repentance for all the sins of my life; and of my resolution of a better obedience for the future, and to enable me by thy grace to make them good. Hear likewise my prayers and supplications for thy blessing upon the solemn action of the day following, and upon thine unworthy servant who is to be dedicated to thy service; and for them whom thou hast set over us; and for these sinful nations; and all for the sake of *thy*

A discourse to his servants,

*dearly beloved SON, in whom thou art well pleased,
JESUS CHRIST the righteous ;*

In whose name and words I concluded my prayers.

Our Father, &c.

*A DISCOURSE to his SERVANTS concerning
receiving the SACRAMENT.*

—**N**OW that I have mentioned the Sacrament, I have a great desire, that as many of you as can should receive it at *Easter*, and that you should carefully prepare yourselves for it against that time. It is the most solemn institution of our religion, and as we are christians, we are obliged to the frequent receiving of it, and we cannot neglect it without a great contempt of our blessed SAVIOUR and his religion. He hath appointed it for a solemn remembrance of his great love to us, in laying down his life for us, and therefore he commands us *to do it in remembrance of him* ; and St. Paul tells us, that *as often as we eat this bread, and drink this cup, we do shew forth the LORD's death till he come.*

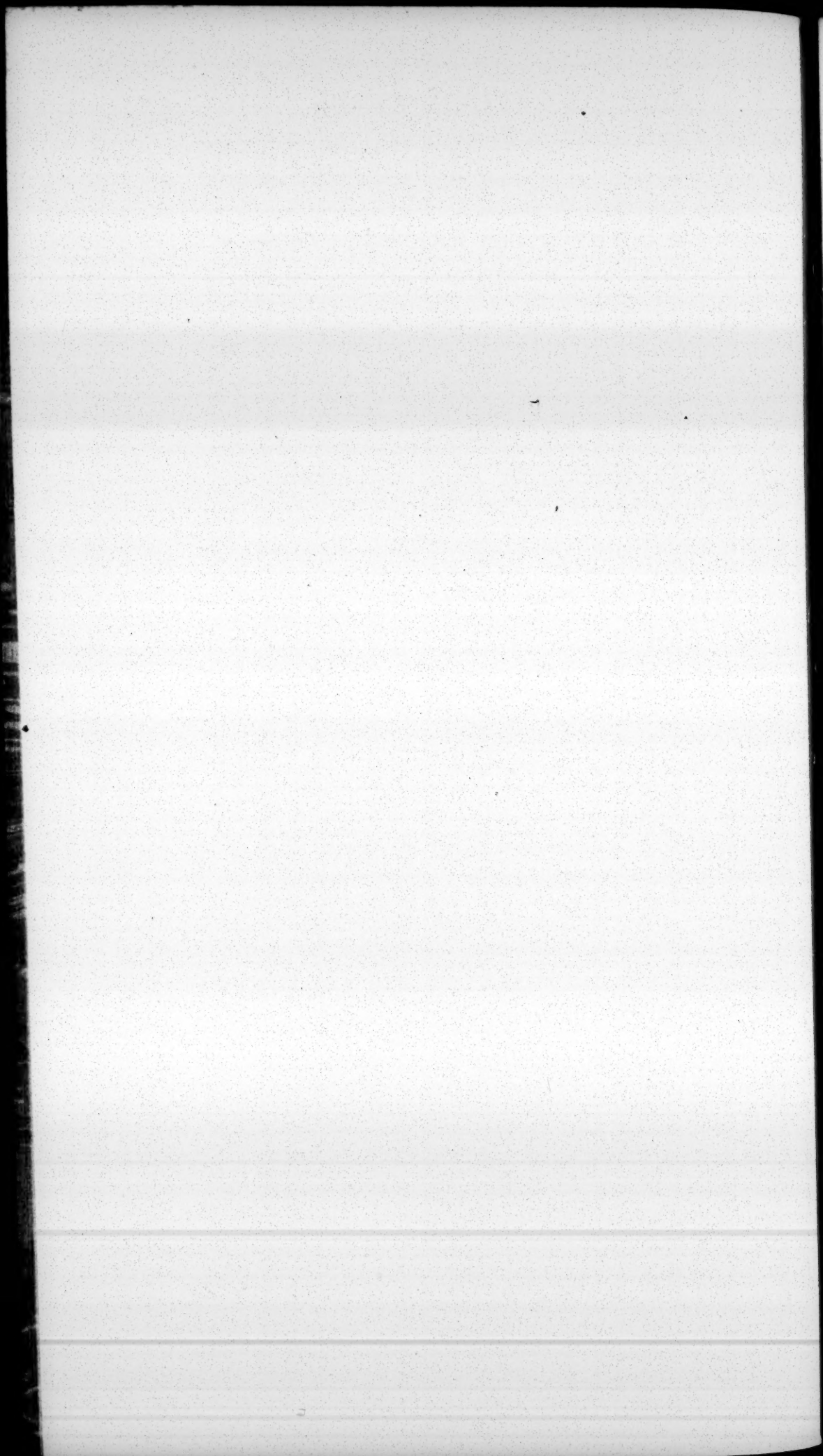
Both the comfort and the benefit of it are great. The comfort of it ; because it does not only represent to us the exceeding love of our SAVIOUR, in giving his body to be broken, and his blood to be shed for us ; but it likewise seals to us all those blessings and benefits which are purchased and procured for us by his death and passion ; the pardon of sins ; and power against sin.

The benefit of it is also great ; because hereby we are confirmed in goodness, and our resolutions
of

of better obedience are strengthened ; and the grace of GOD'S HOLY SPIRIT to enable us to do his will is hereby conveyed to us.

And the best preparation for it is by a sincere repentance for all our sins and miscarriages, which we remember ourselves to be at any time guilty of : by daily prayer to GOD that he would give us a sincere repentance for all our sins, and mercifully forgive them to us : and by a sincere and firm resolution to forsake our sins, and to do better for the future ; to be more careful of all our actions, and more constant in prayer to GOD for his grace to enable us to keep his commandments : by being in charity with all men ? and by forgiving those who have injured us by word or deed, as we hope for forgiveness from GOD.

And let none of us say, that we are not fitted and prepared for it. It is our duty to be so : and if we be not prepared to receive the sacrament, we are not qualified for the mercy of GOD, and for his forgiveness ; we are not prepared for the happiness of heaven, and can have no hopes to come thither : but if we prepare ourselves as well as we can by repentance, and resolutions of being better, and by praying heartily and earnestly to GOD for his grace, he will accept of this preparation, and will give us the comfort of this holy sacrament.



A FORM of
P R A Y E R S,

Used by his Late M A J E S T Y,

K. *W I L L I A M* III.

When he received the

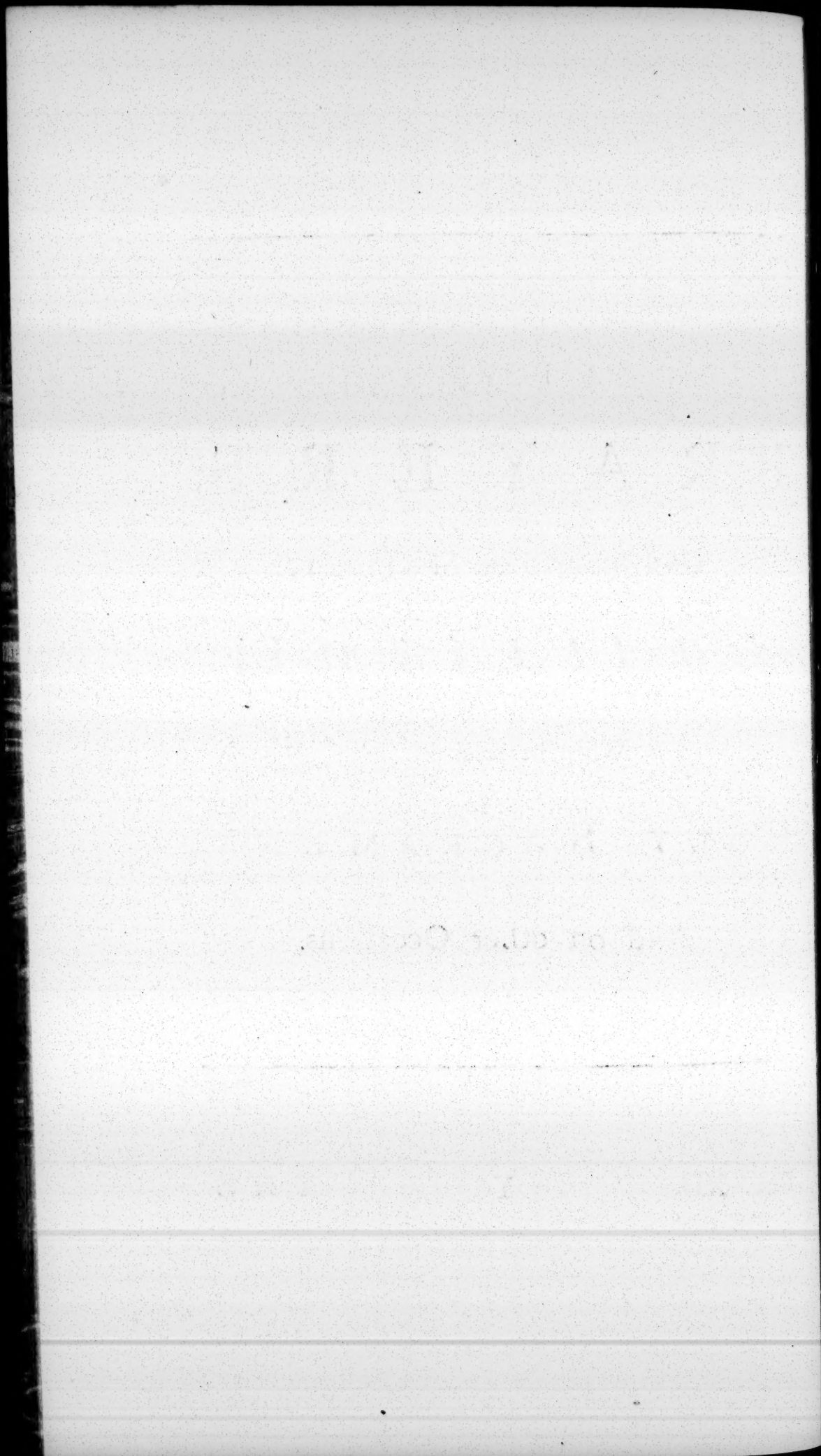
H O L Y S A C R A M E N T,

And on other Occasions.

VOL. XII.

Y

T H E



T H E
C O N T E N T S.

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A FORM of
P R A Y E R S,

Used by his Late M A J E S T Y

K. *W I L L I A M* III.

JOHN ix. 4. *I must work the works of him that sent me, while it is day, the night cometh when no man can work.*

COLOS. iii. 17. *Whatsoever ye do in word or in deed, do all in the name of the LORD JESUS, giving thanks to GOD, and the FATHER by him.*

A prayer to GOD, that he would be pleased to assist and accept my preparation to receive the blessed sacrament.

I Prostrate myself, before thee, my most gracious GOD and merciful FATHER, in an humble acknowledgement of my unworthiness and insufficiency of myself, for any thing that is good. I am sensible that without thee I can do nothing; and therefore do humbly implore thy gracious assistance, and acceptance of my endeavour to prepare myself for the worthy receiving of the blessed sacrament of the body and blood of thy dear SON.

Stir up, I beseech thee, such pious affections and dispositions in my soul, and fill my mind with such

Prayers used by King William.

holy meditations as are suitable to this occasion. Grant me such a sense of my sins, and of the sufferings of my blessed SAVIOUR for them, as may affect my heart with a deep sorrow for my sins, and an eternal hatred and displeasure against them, and may effectually engage me to love, and live to him who dy'd for me, JESUS CHRIST my blessed SAVIOUR and REDEEMER. *Amen.*

A penitent confession of sins, with an humble supplication for mercy and forgiveness.

MOST gracious and merciful GOD, who art of purer eyes than to behold iniquity: I desire to humble my soul before thee, in a deep sense of my own vileness and unworthiness, by reason of the many sins and provocations, which I have been guilty of against thy divine majesty; by thought, word and deed. Forgive, O LORD, all the sins and Follies of my life, which have been many and great; and which I do now with shame and sorrow confess and bewail before thee, for thy mercy's sake in JESUS CHRIST. Pardon, O my GOD, my manifold neglects and omissions, and slight and careless performance of the duties of religion, without due affection and attention of mind; that I have not served thee with that purity of intention, with that sincerity of heart, with that fervency of spirit, with that zeal for thy glory, with that care and diligence, and constancy, that I ought.

Forgive, O LORD, my sins of ignorance and infirmity, which are more than can be numbered; but especially, all my willful transgressions of thy holy and righteous laws; the impurity of my heart and thoughts, all irregular appetites and passions,
and

and every sinful and wicked practice of what nature or kind soever. More particularly, I do with great shame and confusion of face, confess and lament before thee, from whom nothing is hid, that I have grievously offended. * These my transgressions, with many more, which I cannot remember and reckon up before thee, are all in thy sight, O LORD, and my most secret sins in the light of thy Countenance. When I look back upon the errors and miscarriages of my past life, and consider with myself what I have done, and what I deserve at thy hands, my flesh trembleth for fear of thee, and I am afraid of thy judgments. I am ashamed, O my GOD, and blush to lift up mine eyes to thee, my GOD. LORD, I am vile; what shall I answer thee? I abhor myself, and repent in dust and ashes.

Make me deeply sensible of the great evil of my sins, and work in me a hearty contrition for them; and let the sense of them be more grievous to me than of any other evil whatsoever. Have mercy upon me, O LORD, and according to thy tender mercies forgive all my transgressions, for the sake of my blessed SAVIOUR and REDEEMER. *Amen.*

A prayer for the grace and assistance of GOD's HOLY SPIRIT, to enable me to resolve and to do better for the future.

AND now, O LORD, in confidence of thy great mercy and goodness to all that are truly penitent, and sincerely resolve to do better, I most humbly implore the grace and assistance of thy HOLY SPIRIT, to enable me to become

Y 4

every

* Here he was us'd to mention particulars.

every day better, and to reform whatever has been amiss in the temper and disposition of my mind, or in any of the actions of my life. Grant me the wisdom and understanding to know my duty, and the heart and will to do it. Vouchsafe to me the continual presence and direction, the assistance and comforts of thy HOLY SPIRIT; whereby I may be dispos'd and enabled to do thy will with delight and chearfulness, and with patience and contentedness to submit to it in all things. Endue me, O LORD, with the true fear and love of thee, and with a prudent zeal for thy glory. Increase in me more and more the graces of charity and meekness, of truth, and justice, and fidelity; give me humility and patience, and a firmness of spirit to bear every condition with constancy and equality of mind.

Enable me, O LORD, by thy grace to govern all my appetites, and every inordinate lust and passion, by temperance and purity, and meekness of wisdom; setting thee always before me, that I may not sin against thee. Create in me a clean heart, O GOD, and renew a right spirit within me; purify my soul from all evil thoughts and inclinations, from all bad intentions and designs. Deliver me, O LORD, from pride and vanity, from immoderate self-love, and obstinate self-will, and from all malice and envy, and ill-will towards any.

Make me to love thee, as I ought, above all things; and let the interest of thy honour and glory be ever dearer to me than my own will, or reputation, or any temporal advantage whatsoever.

Subdue in me the evil spirit of wrath and revenge; and dispose my heart patiently to bear reproaches
and

and wrongs, and to be ready not only to forgive, but to return good for evil.

Assist me, O LORD, more especially in the faithful and conscientious discharge of the duties of that high station in which thou hast placed me: And grant that I may employ all that power and authority which thou hast invested me with, for thy glory and the public good; that I may rule over men in thy fear, with justice and equity, ever studying and endeavouring the good of the people committed to my charge, and as much as in me lies the peace and prosperity, the welfare and happiness of mankind.

Confirm me, O my G^{OD}, in all these holy Resolutions; and do thou keep it for ever in the purpose of my heart, to perform them to the utmost of my power: All which I humbly beg for thy mercies sake in JESUS CHRIST. *Amen.*

An humble intercession with G^{OD} for all mankind; for the whole christian church, and more particularly for that part of it which is planted in these kingdoms; for the queen, and for all under our government; for my relations and friends; for my native country, and for my allies, &c.

I Thine unworthy servant desire likewise humbly to intercede with thee, the G^{OD} and Father of all, for all mankind; that thou would'st be pleased to have compassion upon their blindness and ignorance, their gross errors and their wicked practices. Send forth, I beseech thee thy light, and thy truth, to scatter that thick darkness which covers

vers the nations, and overspreads so great a part of the world; that thy way may be known upon earth, and thy saving health among all nations.

Bless and preserve thy church dispersed over the face of the earth; restore to it unity and concord, in the acknowledgement of the truth, and the practice of righteousness and goodness. Remove out of it all errors and corruptions, all offences and scandals, all divisions and dissensions, all tyranny and usurpation over the minds and consciences of men; that they who profess the same faith, may no longer persecute and destroy one another, but may be kind and tender-hearted one towards another, as it becomes brethren, and those that are heirs of the same common salvation.

I beseech thee more especially, to be merciful to that part of thy church, which thou hast planted in these kingdoms. Pity the distractions, and heal the breaches of it. Purge out of it all impiety and profaneness; take away those mistakes, and mutual exasperations, which cause so much distemper and disturbance; and restore to it piety and virtue, peace and charity. Endue the pastors and governors of it, with the spirit of true religion and goodness, and make them zealous and diligent to promote it in those who are under their instruction and care. Give them wisdom to discern the best and most proper means of composing the differences of this miserably divided church, the heart to endeavour it, and by thy blessing upon their endeavours the happiness to effect it.

And I beseech thee, O LORD, of thy great goodness, to bless all my relations and friends; particularly my dearest consort the queen. I acknowledge thy special providence in bringing us together, and
thereby

thereby giving me the opportunity and means of being instrumental in rescuing these nations from misery and ruin. And as thou hast been pleased to unite us in the nearest relation; so I beseech thee to preserve and continue that entire love and affection between us, which becomes that relation. And if it be thy blessed will, and thou seekest it best for us, bless us with children to sit upon the throne of these kingdoms, and to be a blessing to them for many generations.

Be merciful also, O GOD, to my native country; let true religion and righteousness be established amongst them, as the surest foundation of their peace and prosperity.

Bless all my allies; O righteous LORD, that lovest righteousness, and hatest falsehood and wrong, do thou stand by us in the maintenance of that just cause in which we are engaged, and bless us with union and good success.

And in thy good time, O LORD, restore peace to Christendom; put an end to those bloody wars and desolations wherewith it hath been so long and so miserably harrafs'd: And, when thou seekest it best and fittest, manifest thy glorious justice in giving check to that ambition and cruelty, which hath been the cause of so great calamities, to so great a part of the world. O GOD, to whom vengeance belongeth, O GOD, to whom vengeance belongeth, shew thyself: Lift up thyself thou judge of the earth, and render a reward to the proud: Scatter the people that delight in war: Let the wickedness of the wicked come to an end, but do thou establish the just.

Be merciful, O GOD, to all that are in affliction or distress; that labour under poverty, or persecution, or captivity: under bodily pains and dis-

diseases, or under temptation and trouble of mind: Be pleased to support and comfort them, and in thy due time to deliver them, according to thy great mercy.

Forgive I beseech thee, most merciful FATHER, to all mine enemies all their malice and ill-will towards me; and give them repentance and better minds: which I heartily beg of thee for them, as I myself hope for mercy and forgiveness at thy hands, through the merits and mediation of JESUS CHRIST my most merciful GOD and SAVIOUR. *Amen.*

A thankful acknowledgment of the mercies of GOD both temporal and spiritual; and above all for the redemption of mankind by the humiliation and sufferings of his SON in our nature.

Blessed and glorious LORD GOD, the great creator and preserver, and governor of all things; my SAVIOUR and deliverer, and continual benefactor; I acknowledge, I admire, I adore thy infinite excellencies and perfections: And let all the creatures in heaven and earth say, *Amen.*

I Render thanks to thee, most gracious GOD, for innumerable favours conferr'd upon me thy poor creature, and most unworthy; for my being, for my reason, and for all other endowments and faculties of soul and body; for thy continual care and watchful providence over me from the beginning of my life, and through the whole course of it: For all the happy circumstances of my birth and education:

For

For the pious care of my dear and ever honoured mother and grandmother, and of all others who had the charge of me in my tender years : For thy unwearied patience towards me, after so many and so great provocations : And for thy merciful and wonderful preservation of me from innumerable dangers and deaths to which I have been exposed all my life. I will still hope in thy goodness, O LORD, who hast been my trust from my youth ; by thee have I been holden up from the womb, my praise shall be continually of thee. Above all I adore thy tender mercy and compassion to me and all mankind, in sending thy only SON into the world to redeem us from sin and misery, and by suffering in our nature, and dying in our stead, to purchase for us eternal life. I bless thee for the light of the glorious gospel, for the knowledge and sense of my duty towards thee ; for delivering me from temptations too hard for me, and supporting me under many : For the direction and assistance, and comforts of thy HOLY SPIRIT : For restraining me by thy grace, and reclaiming me from the ways of sin and vanity : And for all the gracious communications of thy goodness, whereby thou hast inclined my heart to love and fear thee, and enabled me in any measure to do thy will.

For these, and all other thy blessings and favours to me, which are more than can be number'd ; I render unto thee, most gracious GOD, all possible praise and thanks by JESUS CHRIST my blessed LORD and SAVIOUR. *Amen.*

A prayer to GOD, to prepare my heart for the worthy receiving of the holy sacrament, and to make me partaker of the blessings and benefits of it.

I Come to thee, O my LORD GOD, from whom are the preparation of the heart, and the good disposition of our minds for thy worship and service. Fit me, O LORD, by hearty contrition for my sins, and a sincere resolution of a better course, to approach thy altar. Accept of the expiation which thy SON hath made of all my transgressions by the sacrifice of himself, as of a lamb without spot and blemish. Let the remembrance of my sins, and of his bitter sufferings for them, pierce my very heart, and engage me for ever to love and serve him, who laid down his life for me. Cleanse me, O LORD, from all filthiness of flesh and spirit, that I may be a meet guest for thy holy table, and a real partaker of those blessings and benefits which are represented in the sacrament of CHRIST'S body and blood. Strengthen, O GOD, all good resolutions in me; enable me by thy grace faithfully to perform the conditions of that covenant, which I made in baptism, and intend to renew in the holy sacrament, by dedicating myself entirely, and for ever, to the service of my blessed REDEEMER, who hath loved me, and washed me from my sins in his own blood. To him be all honour and glory, thanksgiving and praise, love and obedience for ever and ever. *Amen.*

Short meditations and ejaculations at the communion,

Before the minister begins the service.

I Lift up my soul to thee, my GOD, humbly imploring thy blessing upon me, and gracious assistance

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ance of me in the holy action I am now about. Forgive my want of due preparation, and accept of my sincere desire to perform an acceptable service to thee, through JESUS CHRIST.

Before the receiving of the bread.

L O R D, I am not worthy of the crumbs which fall from thy table.

After the receiving of it.

Greater Love than this hath no man, that a man lay down his life for his friend.

Herein hath God commended his love to us, that whilst we were enemies, he gave his SON to die for us.

Before receiving of the cup.

What shall I render to the L O R D for all his benefits ? I will take the cup of salvation, and I will bless the name of the L O R D.

After the receiving of it.

Blessed be GOD for his unspeakable gift, his dearly beloved SON JESUS CHRIST in whom we have redemption through his blood, even the forgiveness of sins.

After the conclusion of the whole action.

Bless the LORD, O my soul, and all that is within me bless his holy name. Bless the LORD, O my soul, and forget not all his benefits ; who forgiveth all thine iniquities, and healeth all thy diseases : Who redeemeth thy life from destruction ; and crowneth thee with loving kindness, and tender mercies : who satisfieth thy mouth with good things. Bless the LORD, O my Soul.

A prayer to be used in private afterwards.

I praise and magnify thy great and glorious name, O LORD my God, for the blessed opportunity afforded to me this day, of commemorating thy infinite

nite goodness and mercy to me and all mankind, in sending thy only Son into the world to take our nature upon him, to submit to the infirmities and miseries of it, to live amongst us, and to die for us: And to preserve the memory of this great love and goodness of thine to us for ever in our hearts, that thou hast been pleased to appoint the blessed Sacrament, for a solemn remembrance of it. Grant, O LORD, that I may faithfully keep and perform that holy covenant which I have this day so solemnly renewed and confirmed in thy presence, and at thy table. Let it be an eternal obligation upon me of perpetual love and obedience to thee. Let nothing seem hard for me to do, or grievous for me to suffer for thy sake, who whilst I was a sinner, and an enemy to thee, lovedst me at such a rate as never any man did his friend. Grant that by this sacrament there may be convey'd to my soul new spiritual life and strength, and such a measure of thy grace and assistance as may enable me to a greater care of my duty for the future: That I may henceforth live as becomes the redeemed of the LORD; even to him who died for my sins, and rose again for my justification, and is now sat down on the right hand of the throne of God, to make intercession for me: In his holy name and words I conclude my imperfect prayers.

OUR Father which art in heaven, hallowed be thy name: Thy kingdom come: Thy will be done in earth as it is in heaven: Give us this day our daily bread: And forgive us our trespasses, as we forgive them that have trespassed against us: And lead us not into temptation, but deliver us from evil: For thine is the kingdom, the power, and the glory, for ever, Amen.

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